

Hi everyone and welcome to English Practice for Healthcare with Helena Docherty.

I hope you are well and ready to practice your English with me today by listening to my conversation with Anne about when she had a stroke.

This is excellent practice if you are a healthcare professional of taking a patient history. You will hear how I clarify information and dates with Anne and also ask questions that offer the opportunity for her to talk about the effects of stroke that we can't see. For example, how it can affect our work life, our personal life such as in our relationships and also our self-confidence.

Remember you can read the episode transcript on my website for free, just search English Practice for Healthcare or you can see the link in this episodes description.

As always please remember this is not medical advice, it's not designed to support any medical decision making but to support your English language learning with conversations about health.

We all have our own relationship with our health and our own story.

I really enjoyed talking to Anne today and the chance to hear hers and she has a fantastic Sheffield accent, so this is perfect to challenge your listening skills.

Ok, let's begin!

Do you know any of the risk factors for stroke?

Do you know any of the symptoms that can help us recognise when a stroke is happening?

If you wanted to read up on this more and other issues related to stroke, I've put a link to the website for the UK charity, Stroke Association in this episodes description. I really recommend having a look especially for their information guides on different topics. I read their one on seizures and epilepsy after stroke for this episode as I learnt something about this topic from talking with Anne.

Ok, so Anne is a 78-year-old female, she is a great grandmother and lives in Sheffield with her husband. She no longer works but she volunteers once a week at the Sheffield Cathedral.

In the first half of this episode, you will hear Anne tell us a little bit about her work history.

When you are listening try and understand how Anne felt about going back to work following her stroke. So that's after her stroke, how did she feel about going back to work?

Anne explains how her left-hand side has been affected by her stroke and she describes how she tries not to dwell on it. To dwell on something means to continue to think or talk about it after it has happened and it's usually something negative that's happened. So, for example, if you did badly in an exam, a parent might say, ah try not to dwell on it, you did your best.

Anne talks us through the time of the stroke and that she was taken to the Hallamshire hospital. This is one of two main hospitals in the city of Sheffield, and you will hear me say how this hospital is a renowned place for stroke care. If something is renowned, it means it's well known or famous for something.

When Anne got to hospital she was waiting in an ambulance. Try and listen out for um and to answer this question: what did Anne do while she was in the ambulance and what time was it? So that's what did she do when she was sat in the ambulance and what time was it?

It is lovely to meet you Anne. Thank you for sharing your time with us

Not a problem

Um so what have you been up to today anyway?

Cathedral

You've been at the Cathedral?

Yeah

(What do you do there?)

Uh welcoming

So, it purely is welcoming, chatting

Yeah, yeah

So that's probably why I'm good at chatting

And how long have you been doing it?

2013 It was

Right

The year after I'd had the stroke

Ok, right

I used to be a secretary and I they wanted me to go back after the stroke but I didn't want to be a burden on anyone. I felt as though I wouldn't be able to do the job properly

Hmm mm hmm mm

So I went to the cathedral

Right

Asked if they wanted a volunteer, and the rest is history really

Um after your stroke was when you went um when you felt sort of able

Confident

Confident

Yeah

Yeah I think that's the important thing, isn't it? It's building up

That's right

Confidence again

Yeah

Following your stroke

Yeah and that was in an employment agency

Mm mm

In the centre of town, I really enjoyed that, that was different

Mm mm yeah

Yeah. So even after, so all that experience as a secretary, they were obviously supportive, they were

They were great

Yeah

They were really sad when I left them, yeah

But even sort of despite that, it still felt like it was too, difficult after you following the stroke to go back to it or how did you feel it?

I didn't want to put on them. They wanted me to go back

Mmm

They definitely wanted me to go back. Yeah. Yeah

So when you say put on, how do you, how do you mean? Do you mean that, like

Put a burden on someone else

Mmm

If I couldn't do it, somebody else would have to help

Mm mm

Yeah

So in what ways had the stroke affected you that made you sort of feel like? Like...

Well, it was my left side. I've

OK.

I've got a weakness If anything happens, it's always on my left side

Right

Ears, eyes, so it's affected my left side

Mm mm

But I don't try to dwell on it I just I could pretend I'd never had a stroke,

Hmm mm

Yeah

So um can you remember what happened on the day?

The time?

Yeah

Yeah uh we were getting up

Yeah

Uh John was still in bed and I tried to get out I just got up and thought there's something strange here and I put my foot down and I couldn't feel where my leg was going

Right

Then I managed to get myself up and I said to him something strange is happening here I can't feel my leg and then I tried to walk, because we live in a tiny bungalow so we could reach for the walls and I'm trying to hold myself at side of the wall and walk around and I got to the bathroom how I did it, I don't I really don't know uh and John says I'm going to ring 999 he says cos it, this is, I think this might be a stroke Anne

Really

Cos yeah, I felt alright otherwise

Yeah

But when they came, they said I'd definitely had a stroke

OK

Uh we it was about 4 o'clock in the morning and they said, you're not too late cos you have to report a stroke quickly, don't you?

Mm-hmm yeah. Act fast

Yeah and um they took me over to the Hallamshire

Uh uh

And there at the time they were doing a test and I agreed to uh chat to them um

So like a trial

A trial

Right

Yeah, like a trial

Ahhh

And I was out in four days my leg was working, my arm was alright (laughs)

So what? Can you remember what the trial was? What they were researching?

No but what really pleased me a couple of weeks ago you may have heard it on the television a guy at the Hallamshire doctor Ali Ali

Uh-huh

He was my consultant

OK

And they're looking now again into another trial for people who have strokes

Right yeah I have heard that the Hallamshire is actually quite a centre for like I think it's quite renowned um as a place for you know good care following a stroke

Yeah

And looking at different ways of like the pathway I suppose what you do when someone presents

It was really good I didn't have a long follow up afterwards I mean he was really pleased

So I'm just going back to the day when you so you said it was 4:00 AM, was it?

Yeah

Right, so you just, so you got up you maybe were gonna go

I wanted to go to the bathroom

To the toilet mm

Yeah

Um ok

And I think I was in hospital by about 6:00. No, I was sat in the ambulance outside they were doing more blood pressure and stuff in the ambulance and I said, do you mind if I phone my employers

Ah cos I won't be into work tomorrow

And that employer was, that's the one, the employment agency. That's who I was with at the time and I phoned them and said they think I might have had a stroke. No I said I think I might have had a stroke and the ambulance man said you have had a stroke my dear and you won't be back at work today (laughs)

So even when you're in the ambulance, all that's going on, you're thinking, ohh, I must let work know that I won't be in

That's right

(laughs) Ohh, it's funny work ethics isn't it um

It is

Yeah

Umm, but so can you remember how you felt in yourself other than so no other symptoms other than that weakness?

No

On your left-hand side

I had to do a swallow test

Ok

That was one of the first things and that was alright, and they brought me some toast or something it was. I think it was no, wasn't toast It must have been porridge because I remember this hand

Mmm

Ended up in the porridge

Right right

So I'd got that It was definitely that left side, but within two, three days, I was out in four days

And had you regained movement in that hand?

Yeah, yeah I had to um we they took you to a kitchen in the hospital and you had to make yourself a drink

Oh right

That's why I did the toast yeah, yeah

Um and was that with can you remember who was that with the occupational therapists? Does that sound familiar yeah

Probably or it could have just been the nurses on the ward

Uh uh

But they said I've got to prove that I could make a drink

Mm mm

I had to boil a kettle and make a make a drink just so it was so I was safe

Yeah

But I think I must have used my right hand

Most of the time

Yeah

Because as I say there was a weakness in my left hand there's still is I drag my left foot

Right right

But I've not had to go back

No

At all and I've not had any they seem to think because I had an incident in the hairdressers

Mm mm

So about two years ago, I slipped off the seat

OK

They said that they thought I'd had uh what is it?

TIA? Was it a T?

No

No

They thought I'd uh oh what I can't remember the word

Not a transient ischemic attack

No, that

No so OK

That was a stroke I had had that about a year before I had had at the actual stroke

Oh right

I had one of those too

Oh right you'd had a TIA cos often those...

They think that I might still be having them, cos in the hairdressers they phoned an ambulance and they sent me to neurology

Mmm mm

And they said that they couldn't find anything ohh, what's whats the other it begins with a E I just can't for the life of me think what

Begins with an E

Epilepsy

Oh wow

Fit. They thought I'd had a fit

Ok right

I wasn't aware of that I just said there was a guy sat next to me and he said you're alright duck?

(Laughs)

I say's yeah whats that, he says you ok? I says yeah I'm fine and I didn't even know what had happened

Right

But they thought I must be a bit confused and the hairdresser herself, and this guy said that I'd been shaking they thought I'd had a fit

Wow



Yeah

And you had no memory of it at all when you came round?

No so they took me there to neurology

Yeah

And I was going there for almost a year

Oh really

Yeah, so I'm trying to think now, connect everything after that

Can umm if you've had a stroke, can that bring on epilepsy? I don't know actually

I'm really not sure

We heard there how a long time uh after her stroke Anne experienced a seizure while she was at the hairdressers. She was referred to neurology and they kept an eye on her, which is another way of saying to monitor her, following this episode. So, I needed to go on to do some reading about this as I uh mentioned earlier because it hadn't occurred to me the relationship between a stroke, seizures, and the possibility of developing epilepsy but of course this does make a lot of sense as a stroke causes damage to our brain cells um and that's the part of the body involved in seizures.

Right so the questions. How did Anne feel about returning to work after her stroke? So, Anne was worried that she might not be able to do the job the same as she had before:

*They were really sad when I left them, yeah*

*But even sort of despite that, it still felt like it was too, difficult after you following the stroke to to go back to it or how did you feel it?*

*I didn't want to put on them. They wanted me to go back.*

*Mmm*

*They definitely wanted me to go back. Yeah. Yeah.*

*So when you say put on, how do you, how do you mean? Do you mean that, like*

*Put a burden on someone else*

*Mmm*

*If I couldn't do it, somebody else would have to help*

She used a phrasal verb here 'to put on'. She didn't want to put on them. This is uh to put on someone is a feeling like you are causing them an inconvenience you're causing extra work for someone else.

The second question was what did Anne do when she was in the ambulance and what time was it?

*And I think I was in hospital by about 6:00. No, I was sat in the ambulance outside they were doing more blood pressure and stuff in the ambulance and I said, do you mind if I phone my employers?*

*Ah cos I won't be into work tomorrow*

*And that employer was, that's the one, the employment agency. That's who I was with at the time and I phoned them and said they think I might have had a stroke. No I said I think I might have had a stroke and the ambulance man said you have had a stroke my dear and you won't be back at work today (laughs)*

So it was 6 in the morning and while sat in an ambulance Anne wanted to ring work to let them know she wouldn't be in and I think many people can relate to this, being so worried about letting down people at work that even when we are really unwell our first thought is always oh no what about work, I must let them know!

Right, so in the second half Anne talks a bit more about being in hospital after her stroke and talks about life after um after, after this uh so listen out for what new hobby Anne took up and our discussion about how ill health can impact on relationships.

What I was gonna ask you about was um that uh recovery time after you stroke umm well I suppose the initial recovery those four days in hospital um can you remember, did you work with physiotherapists?

Yes

Yeah

The physios came round. Yeah, yeah. It was definitely, it was a haemorrhagic stroke if that

A haemorrhagic stroke

Yeah

Which was a bleed

OK

Of the brain. The left hand side

Right. So you had to go for a CT scan did you then

Ohh yeah

Was that pretty much as soon as you arrived?

Yes

Mmm

Yeah. That's how they discovered it

Mmm mm

Yeah

So that's how it yeah so they confirmed it with that. So all of your symptoms were saying this is like a stroke then do the scan and then that

That proved it

That showed it in black and white you can see you've got this bleed

Yeah, a bleed

On the left side

On the left hand side

Of your brain

Yeah

And what did you think when they showed you? Did they show you the scan, do you remember?

Yeah they did

Yeah. But I'm not very medical

Mmm

My husband was interested, very

Mmm

(Laughs) yeah uh

Had anyone in your family ever had a stroke?

No

No

No, It just came out the blue as I say about a year before that, I'd had what they call a TIA

So after you got home, can you, so sorry I asked you, when they showed you that scan, how, what did you think? Were you surprised? Were you like, how did you feel?

I sort of just took it all in my stride you know I thought ohh, I'm glad they've caught it in time

Mmmm

But I didn't feel really, apart from the funny feeling and putting my hand in my food n

Yeah

Apart from that I can't say as I felt it didn't affect my face, my speech or anything

Not your eating and drinking

No

So in that time, before going back to work, can you remember, you know, how was life different? Was life different? Obviously your not working. Was life different?

I got bored at home. Yeah, plus I had all my everything taken off me. I wasn't allowed to cook

Oh right

And I haven't done any cooking as such really since that because he took over after that stroke

Right

He wouldn't let me use a cooker, being protective really

Yeah, so when they said so, you said they they told you you could...they advised you not to cook or were they like...

No

Don't cook

Well, they said to be careful

Right

And I think he picked up on that

And took it very literally of its best if I just do

Yeah

All the cooking now

Um so that's a big change then, isn't it?

Yeah, it has been a big change really yeah

Mm mm so did you al so you um did they also say you couldn't drive?

Ohh yes

Did they take off

They took the driving off me, but I did get my license back. I've still got my license, but I don't drive now

So, so they didn't stop you from driving

No

No

They did temporarily

Temporarily

Yeah

Right Ok

About six months I think it was

Ok so you couldn't drive for six months

But I didn't have to take a test

OK, you were just given the all clear by the doctor again

Yeah

To say you can go back to driving

Yeah

Umm, so, so you were at home, so you yeah, your husband was sort of wrapping you a bit in cotton wool

Yeah

Yeah

Which he thought he was doing the right thing

But it's, very, you know, nobody really there's not sort of instructions really

No

On how to recover how after something, so big

No

Like a stroke

Yeah

I can definitely understand what you mean when someone is ill um or recovering or something big has happened um maybe it's a stroke or recovering from cancer and the temptation can be to do everything for them

Yeah

To look after them and do everything for them

That's right

Oh let me do that, I'll do that, but and that's because we care for them and you know we want to make them better but it's that it's a balance isn't it

It is

N, but it's very difficult to find sometimes

That's right

Yeah

It just shows you like the pressure that health and issues with health can put on relationships, can't they?

Exactly, yeah

Yeah

Yeah

Yeah, I know that. I think the same happened to me when I had long COVID. Think it put a lot of pressure

Yes

And I was actually the opposite It was um you know, why don't you do this? Why don't you do that? Why don't we go for a run? What you know, you know, why aren't you working? And I was like, well, I can't so it was the opposite problem from

From my problem yeah

But you know it's still just shows you but I think it's an interesting, you know, interesting point an interesting reflection that um just of the far-reaching effect and impact of health

Yeah, it has had an impact yeah it has talking to you about it. I've never really thought of it that way but yeah, it has

Mmm mm

Yeah

So you, so you said you meant... you mentioned you took up reading

Yes

Yeah, you got into reading did you?

I'm a big fan of I don't know if you've heard of her Rosie Goodwin

No

Probably not might not be your thing It's families in the First World War, The Second World war and it's how families lived

Mmm yeah

There really

(sounds interesting)

I can't put them down, I've had a I think I must have read the last year or so I've got every one of her books, she's just er just released another four, but they're not a I say released she's just told people that they're going to be released. I think it's going to be next year

Right

So I'm waiting for these four books coming out now because I've read all the others, but I've just recently in the last two weeks, with the stormy weather and having to wait in a lot

Mm mm

I've started reading them over and over again now

Have you

And

There that good (laughs)

There very good, yeah and I can't as I'm going through it, these books I'm on about the 4th or the fifth one now on off the bookshelf, which I read years ago

Mm mm

And I'm just getting back into them, but I can't think oh I'm fed up with this I've already read this. I can't, I vaguely remember a lot of things that happen, but I have this habit of going and reading to the back page, I think oh yes it did turn out alright, yeah

Oh really you go to the back

(laughs)

Um had you been into reading before?

No

No, right

Wasn't the thing I did

Ah ok

No but it's because I'm bored, uh at home and that's why I started working at the cathedral

So but you went back to the so you started the volunteering because you were you wanted something to do, you wanted like what, what, what did it do for you?

Because I was helping people

Yeah

Chatting

Hmm mm

Which is what I am now rather than responsible for lots of accounts and things, yeah, I, I plus, I've not been able to use a computer since I knew all the I I worked with the computer all the time

Yeah yeah

Yeah

Um so but it still gave you so like you said so less less pressure slightly less pressure from having to do, you know, multiple accounts, lots of stuff on the computer, but giving you a sense of purpose, is that?

Yes

Is that fair to say

That's right yeah, yeah, like this morning I've had a lady in and she was she was crying and I said look, I went and got her a water, I said you wait there, I'll get someone to help you It's just



knowing that you're helping somebody cause really with people who come into the cathedral, they're older

Yeah

A lot older than I am

Mm mm

And I might be the first person and the only person they speak to

Yeah

When they get home there's nobody else

Yeah, yeah

And sometimes it gets a little bit It depends on the person, really but if you feel you've made them feel better and they keep coming in, then they ask what day are you working? Ohh, I'll come and see you and they'll come in and give me a big hug

Yeah

Just because I've made them welcome so I do feel as though yeah I

And then well, you're making making a difference

That's right

Yeah

Yeah

Well thank you for sharing and it really is, well, a privilege to have the conversation with you

Thank you

And to learn a little bit, a little bit of insight

It took you

Into what it might be like

You had to dig didn't you to get me to remember it

Ohh well, no, that's fine. We should have done a timeline first. I said in one of my other ones that I like doing a timeline

Timeline

We should have done a timeline before

Should we

(laughs)

Ok great there we go. Thank you again to Anne for sharing her experience of stroke. I think she really highlighted the importance of feeling like you have purpose and that you can do things for yourself. This is where occupational therapists are so important in healthcare to support people to continue to participate in the things they enjoy. So it's a really valuable referral that we can consider as healthcare professionals or something to ask about if we are a patient and and struggling with this area to ask our nurse or doctor or whoever we are in contact with for our health and they should be able to signpost you or help you to this type of support from an occupational therapist. I've put a link in this episodes description if you wanted to understand more about occupational therapy as I do remember um, well, for me, I wasn't quite sure what they did even when I was nursing and it was only when I had a close friend who retrained as an OT that I started to really understand it. Um so yeah, have a look at that link its from the NHS website and there's a good video on there about occupational therapy.

Ok and Anne started reading if you were listening for out, uh if you were listening out for what new hobby she started uh when she was at home and um resting, recovering from her stroke she started reading and that's a hobby that's she's kept up and she continues to enjoy, reading.

Right, well brilliant English practice, you can follow the podcast to hear about future episodes um and please do rate it if you like it with 5 stars so thanks so much for listening and I will speak to you soon, in the next episode so bye for now, thank you, bye, bye.