



## Occupational Therapy & Stroke

Occupational therapy can be a critical component to help improve quality of life for post-stroke recovery. Occupational therapists can help patients improve their sensory and motor abilities during the recovery period so patients can relearn valuable skills, including grooming, using a computer, and cooking.

### What Is Occupational Therapy?

Occupational therapy practitioners ask, "What matters to you?"  
not, "What's the matter with you?"

In its simplest terms, occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants help people across the lifespan participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations).

Common occupational therapy interventions include helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and social situations, helping people recovering from injury to regain skills, and providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes.

Occupational therapy services typically include:

- an individualized evaluation, during which the client/family and occupational therapist determine the person's goals,
- customized intervention to improve the person's ability to perform daily activities and reach the goals, and
- an outcomes evaluation to ensure goals are being met and/or make changes to the intervention plan.

Reference American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)[here](#).

**Flint Rehab Tools to Spark Recovery** created a comprehensive list of therapy tools for stroke patients such as adaptive utensils, rocker knives, zipper pulls, sock aids and more.

Visit their website [here](#) to learn more about these devices and other helpful therapy tools. See picture (right) of an automatic pot stirrer.



## Jenny Kray

Meet Jenny Kray, SSEEO volunteer and stroke survivor.

“SSEEO has helped grow my community, introducing me to motivated, like-minded people and helping me find my place in this world.”

The morning of February 28, 2015, I woke up with a bad headache. I thought I was just dehydrated, but the pain only got worse. While having lunch in my living room, I collapsed to the floor. The left side of my body had given out completely. My parents called 911 and I was taken to the emergency room where they confirmed I was having a brain bleed; a ruptured tangle of vessels called a Cavernoma located in the Pons-Medulla area of my brainstem. I was flown to the university hospital where my condition deteriorated rapidly. I was put on a ventilator and the on-call physician told my family I likely wouldn't survive the day. That afternoon, the neurosurgeon was walking through my unit when he saw me, started asking questions, took over my case, and immediately took me to surgery. I awoke from surgery the following day, able to move my eyes and the tip of my right thumb. I have been recovering ever since.



Due to my left-sided weakness, my left arm has yet to wake-up and be functional. Learning how to navigate certain life skills without the use of both my hands can be tricky. For example, doing my hair or zipping my sweater which I often ask for help with. I have plenty of physical challenges I am still trying to overcome, such as my decreased balance and body awareness, left-sided weakness, oscillopsia (visual deficit), and high tone and spasticity. However, I have made huge strides to be where I am today largely due to my incredible support system. My father helps me exercise every day. We incorporate a variety of interventions, from kneeling and standing exercises to Mirror Box therapy to biking around the neighborhood.

My words of encouragement to other stroke survivors are “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” -Philippians 4:13. This verse has been my motto since my time in the ICU. Every bit of progress I've made is a result of God's strength, which I depend on. Nonetheless, life and recovery have not gone as I've planned. I'm not fully recovered, I'm not working in the field I went to grad school for, but God is using me. He is taking my brokenness and making a difference in the world – a bigger difference than I could ever make on my own. And He will do the same for you. Also know, with the moments of deep grief and gut-wrenching frustration are moments of clarity, purpose, and tremendous self-growth.

I have been advocating for the stroke community by speaking to healthcare schools and hospitals about my experience having a brain bleed and the challenge against dignity, communication, and client-centered care which come along with it. I also volunteer for SSEEO's Young Stroke Learning Group and Rehabilitation Committee.

Because of my stroke, I was not able to receive my Occupational Therapy Degree which I was 3 months away from completing. The SSEEO Rehabilitation Committee has allowed me to use my OT education and I am currently co-leading an initiative with OT students helping stroke survivors regain independence after their stroke and specifically helping those who need more therapy because of insurance, therapy caps, etc.

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## Therapeutic Golf

Ryan Crane, Recreational Therapist at Marian Joy Rehabilitation Hospitals talks about the benefits of therapeutic golf for post stroke rehabilitation.

Previous golf experience or equipment is not needed!

To learn more, listen to the SSEEEO podcast [here](#).

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