



# Stéphan Rouleau

A survivor story

[Click the link to read Stéphan's story.](#)

Did you know that June is Brain Injury Awareness Month in Canada? This month, we're shining a spotlight on Brain Injury. Help us raise awareness about brain injury in Canada by following along with our posts & sharing our posts with your friends!

**#SPOTLIGHTONBRAININJURY**

In June 2018 and for no specific reason, I suffered an acute stroke while I was out of town. Simply put, I fell asleep before taking the wheel to drive home to Paris from Hamilton. Thankfully, I managed to make it home safely after filling up my gas tank and paying for it, while stroked, with no memory of doing any of this whatsoever.

I spent 11 and 371 days in the hospital and at home recovering respectively. My stroke was a result of a carotid dissection, a tear in one of my carotid arteries. As a result, I lost two-thirds of my right brain permanently with no hope of getting any of it back. At the time of my acquired brain injury, I was a semi-pro mountain bike racer and runner. Once admitted and fully assessed at the hospital I was given a very slim chance of walking again. But through perseverance, I am walking, riding my bike and working again. The only after-effect I have is quadrantanopia, a lesion of an optic radiation nerve.

The main thing that inspired me the most to not let the prognosis of possibly being in a wheelchair for the rest of my life at 48 years old get me down, was how encouraging and supportive my physiotherapist Joe was. I believe I would be in worse shape today had it not been for his words of support. He taught me to push the limits of the human soul in order to get myself out of the wheelchair. "Be myself, only better", he repeated to me again and again while trying to get my legs to move and not let the stroke get the best of me. Family support was also paramount in my recovery. I also cherished having the opportunity to experience zotherapy while hospitalized. Once I was home, I dedicated my time researching anything and everything about strokes. I Googled the keywords strokes...men...vision trouble... 48 years old...etc and read as much as I could on the topic.

I knew I wanted my life back, but I realized that we don't get what we want in life. We get what we have to have. So I started attending seminars, conventions and symposiums on brain injuries so I could learn and help myself get better and healthier. Through my research and speaking with dieticians, nutritionists and neurologists, I discovered that nutrition plays a vital role in post-recovery care. I then chose to change my eating habits and cut out most processed foods and follow an anti-inflammatory lifestyle as inflammation plays a key role in well-being. It is my belief that through self-discipline, dedication, eating well, self-care and moral support, anyone can make the impossible possible. I feel attending a support group was instrumental in getting me on the right path, so I highly recommend it to anyone even if you think you probably won't benefit from sharing your story. In closing, please remember that life is like seasons. It won't always be raining or cloudy, better days are always ahead.