



Six Steps to Take When Reinventing Life After a Neurologic Diagnosis

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Assess your job. See if you can keep working, says Kamal Chemali, MD, professor of neurology at University Hospitals Cleveland. “If your impairment doesn't affect your profession, you may be able to keep doing it, even if not at the same level. Look for adaptive measures that can help you stay in it.”

Shift your role. Think about what else you can do within your chosen field, especially if it's something you really love, says Dr. Chemali. “Every field has things that are adjacent,” he says. “If you're a doctor or a medical student, you obviously have a passion for science. Maybe you will not be able to care for patients, but you could get involved in research.”

Find a mentor. If you're thinking of a different career, talk to someone in that field who can advise you on options, says A.M. Barrett, MD, FAAN, chair of the department of neurology at UMass Chan Medical School in Worcester.

Expand a hobby. “Often, people haven't considered doing, or given themselves permission to do, the things they love part-time as a full-time pursuit,” Dr. Barrett says. “Your side gig could become your main thing.”

Keep an open mind. “Be receptive to new experiences and new possibilities, and focus on what you can do versus what you can't,” says Nia Mostacero, an Air Force veteran who became a beauty pageant contestant after being diagnosed with [dementia](#) related to head injuries sustained in childhood. “I'm taking a Latin dance class and voice lessons. I'm trying to explore what still works and challenging that.”

Persist. “Whatever you decide to do, don't give up,” says Joe Salazar, a former medical student who became a high school robotics teacher after being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. “It sounds like a cliché, but you have to find your drive, your motivation. My motivation is my 3-year-old son. He relies on me, so for the next 30 years I need to find a way to be well. Once you find that motivation, nothing will stop you.”
