Singer K-Ci Hailey: Stroke Survivor

Two years ago, this member of the popular R&B group Jodeci—and one half of the duo K-Ci and Jo-Jo—was silenced by a stroke. He recovered.

October 28, 2020 As told to Kate Ferguson

What happened in 2018 preceding the stroke and then right afterward?

I had just gotten back from the road, and my wife and I went to a movie. When I returned home, I wasn't feeling well. In the middle of the night, I had a bad headache. My wife rushed me to the emergency room. After some tests, I was diagnosed with a stroke.

Prior to the stroke, what did you experience physically that told you something was definitely wrong?

I knew I was tired, but this headache was different than any other headache I ever had.

After your stroke, how were you affected physically and mentally?

Initially, I knew I couldn't talk or walk. My whole left side was numb. I was confused about a lot of things, and I had some memory loss.

After the doctors diagnosed you as having had a stroke and said that it would be at least six months before you could walk or talk again, what were your thoughts?

I was just trying to get better and recover. I wasn't sure what was going on. My wife was the one who was speaking to the doctors. Our faith is strong, and we knew we would get through it. My family and the few people who knew what I was going through kept me in their prayers.

How did having a stroke change your life—physically and mentally?

The stroke and my recovery changed my entire lifestyle. Mentally, I was more focused on myself and getting better at exercising regularly, physical therapy and changing my diet. Fishing is my passion. I call it my meditation. I started fishing again and just really taking care of myself.

In general, how did your stroke affect your wife?

First and foremost, it brought us closer to God. It made our relationship stronger and closer. We

are now inseparable. She is always by my side to be my support system. A strong faith in God can remove fear and doubt.

What did you learn about yourself from this experience?

My faith was restored as a God-fearing man. I learned I’m not invincible. I learned that I am resilient and have grown to be more independent.

What therapy did you undergo for the stroke, and how long did it take for you to achieve full recovery from this illness?

My road to recovery was not a short one. I had speech, physical and occupational therapy twice a day, three times a week. I also had to do follow-ups with my doctors. I was seeing two physical therapists, a speech therapist and a neurologist, working on my recovery every day. Then working on continuing to maintain lifestyle changes to make sure this doesn’t happen to me again. That meant no drinking, no smoking and no stress.

Please describe what you experienced when you regained your ability to sing, and then later, when you were able to walk again, after having a stroke.

After my stroke, I could already sing—my voice never left. I just wasn’t able to talk. When I was released from the hospital, I couldn’t walk on my own. The medical team tried to give me a walker, but I refused. Once I was able to regain my ability to walk on my own again, it was a relief because I had my independence back.

Of what importance is the song “Jesus Saves” in your life—as a child and now as a stroke survivor?

As a child, I liked the song, and it was my grandmother’s favorite song. She had me promise that my first record would be a gospel song. I loved my grandmother and kept my promise to her. So it became the first song I recorded as Little Cedric with Little Cedric & the Hailey Singers. Today, as a stroke survivor, I am proof that “Jesus Saves,” and it was important to rerecord this song at this time.

Of what importance in your life is your song “Tears in Heaven”? And how does this song connect with you personally during the current coronavirus health crisis?

My mentor, Andre Harrell, was an important person in both my personal and professional lives. His

sudden passing was difficult. “Tears in Heaven” expressed how I was feeling from his loss. This is a very difficult time for so many people, and I wanted to share this song and its message, hoping it would give them the same comfort it gave me.

What are your thoughts about prayer and its power to transform people’s lives as it did yours?

Prayer is powerful and is the key to all things. Without prayer, there is no deliverance or healing. Prayer changes everything. Believe and have faith that you will make it through. God changes things for the better. You can work through anything.

What specific lifestyle changes have you made to achieve a more balanced and healthy way of

living, especially given the demands of being an entertainer in the hectic and demanding world of the music industry?

I put God first and changed people, places and things around me both personally and professionally. I’m back in my studio, recording new music for my upcoming album and keeping up with maintaining my daily routine: exercising, eating healthy and making sure I keep my stress levels down. And I have my life partner to share the future with me.

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