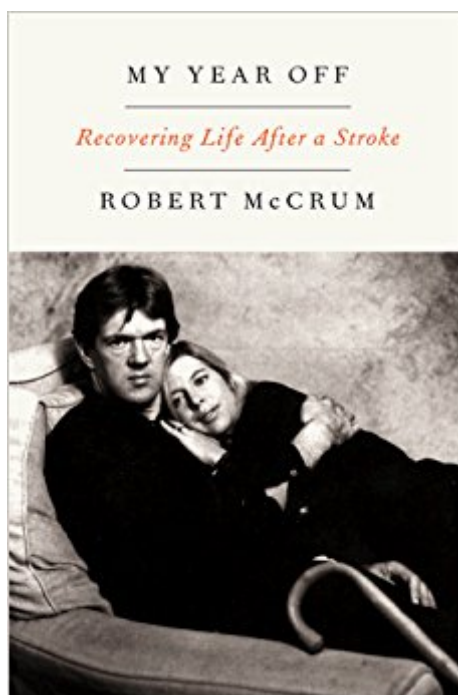


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# My Year Off: Recovering Life After A Stroke



## Synopsis

A frank and moving memoir of the stroke that felled the author at his peak of vigor and achievement. On the morning of July 29, 1995, Robert McCrum • 42 years old, just two weeks newly married, at the top of his profession as one of British publishing's most admired editors, in what he thought was the full bloom of health • awoke to find himself totally paralyzed on the left side, the victim of a stroke brought on by a massive cerebral hemorrhage. After a nightmarish day struggling to reach a phone, he finally summoned help. In the weeks to come, he would have to face the reality that his life had irrevocably changed and that medical science, maddeningly, could neither pinpoint the cause of the stroke nor offer any guarantee of recovery. What ensued was a battle beset by frustration and depression but equally marked by small victories, the help of dedicated physicians and therapists, and, first and last, the support of his new wife, whose love proved equal to their dismaying circumstances. My Year Off is an eloquent story of hope, written with the sort of candor and detail that the author believes has been missing in the literature of strokes up to this time. It is as well a grown-up love story of the most realistic • and hence, inspiring • kind.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

On July 28, 1995, Robert McCrum suffered a severe stroke at the age of 42. His thoughtful memoir chronicles the long, arduous process of recovery. Drawing on his own diaries and those of his wife, Sarah Lyall (then the publishing columnist for the New York Times), McCrum presents a detailed portrait of the physical and psychological effects of a stroke. His speech was impaired and his left

arm and leg were paralyzed, but almost worse was the emotional havoc those disabilities wrought. As the hard-driving, hard-living editor of English publishing house Faber & Faber, McCrum had defined himself for 20 years by what he did--now he was forced to ask himself who he was. He ruefully admits that his upbringing in the privileged British upper-middle class, traditionally suspicious of introspection, had ill prepared him for such a struggle, and he pays loving tribute to his American spouse's crucial role in his recovery. (Indeed, the excerpts from Lyall's diaries, which honestly reveal doubt, fear, and anger, are among the book's most moving sections.) Famous friends like Salman Rushdie and Michael Ondaatje make appearances at McCrum's London hospital bedside, but Lyall is the narrative's heroine, and the hard-working staff of physical and speech therapists the invaluable supporting players. The author's lucid explanation of stroke's medical aspects and thorough account of his slow progress toward nearly full recovery will inform and inspire other stroke victims, but at heart this is a touching marital love story and an exciting drama of personal rebirth. --Wendy Smith

McCrum (*The Story of English*), editor-in-chief of the British publisher Faber & Faber, was 42 years old and newly married when, one night in the summer of 1995, he suffered a massive stroke that almost killed him. This account of how that night changed his life, told with a skillful blend of candor, humor and comprehensible medical reportage, is not only an enthralling read but also calls attention to the little-known fact that strokes, normally thought of as an affliction of the elderly, attack younger people with remarkable frequency. As it turned out, McCrum was lucky; he almost entirely regained the use of his limbs, although he has a sluggish arm and tires easily. His personality also changed, from hard-driving and aggressive to reflective and relaxed. His marriage to Sarah Lyall, who, when he met her (at the Frankfurt Book Fair) was the New York Times publishing correspondent, obviously helped enormously in his recovery. Some of the most touching segments in the book are excerpts from Lyall's journals of dealing with her husband's slow recovery and his own thoughts on his sometimes harsh and bitter behavior as he strove to regain his life. The book offers solace to those similarly afflicted and is also a moving human document that, because of its protagonist, will be of particular interest to those in the book business. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Mr. McCrum, recently pronounced a completely healthy person, has an "insult to the brain" in his forties, and this book chronicles his thoughts and progress from the stroke onward, with sidetracks back to his "former" life, and how he deals with that vs. his "new" life as a stroke victim. For those of

us who thought stroke only happened to our elderly parents, and don't quite know how to approach the situation when it affects our contemporaries (more frequently than we might like to think), this book is a good insight into what our friends might be going through, and what they will go through in the recovery period ... the effects of stroke are, of course, most difficult for the patient, but the friends and families also have a lot to think about and understand. I thought that the questions this book raises provide a lot of guidance for the things that one needs to think of, as well as an insight into what your friend might be dealing with. Very valuable from the perspective of the friends/family -- I await my friend's reaction as the patient, altho cannot help but think that it might be of interest because there seems to be a dearth of information about what is happening/could happen at a younger age, altho it is, in fact, rather common. I would highly recommend this book for people who know people in, say, their forties or fifties, who have had stroke -- it's quite a different issue than confronting it in your parents or elderly relatives, and we probably all need more the more specific information about what stroke is and isn't that this book provides.

Unlike most books about illness, this is written by and for intelligent people. My husband, much older and sicker than the author, has been inspired and kept going by this book, which he says explains how he feels as an invalid--a stroke victim,"imprisoned in his body" and explains some of the physiological and medical aspects of the problem. I also appreciate the diary comments of his wife, many of which echo my own feelings. Including quotes from other writers, commentary and diaries expands the perspective of the author's voice, and is an excellent device.

This is one of the best books I've read about brain injury. It's extremely well-written. I especially appreciated the honesty of the journal entries from Robert's wife. This book showed that brain injury affects the entire family. My husband had a brain aneurysm in 1992, resulting in aphasia (a language disability). Like the author, my husband is a well educated, young man, suddenly thrown into the world of brain injury and rehabilitation. I will share this book with others, especially wives of brain injury survivors.

It was very difficult for me to read this book because the author described the stroke and its' aftermath in a way that mirrored my own stroke of 5 years ago. And so i was taken back to that moment and so many other moments when i struggled so much with simple tasks. his writing holds your attention. was very hard to put this book down. Gave me much hope for my own rehabilitation.

A brilliantly told account of what its like to have a stroke to recover from it and how it affects the family who get to go through the process of whole recovery with him a very positive story in the end after a huge trauma

nice to have a personal story

Like the author, I too suffered an inexplicable stroke at a young age (38). Like him, I wish that this book had been around when I was recovering. Stroke changes people and a surprising number of young (under 65) people fall victims too it. With sympathy and style, McCrum has braved the abyss and written a book which is essential for stroke victims and their families to read

Great book Recommend this reading to everyone I know Cannot stop reading Well written Easy to get involved and forget is time to go to sleep

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