

Recovering From Brain Surgery

Category: Surgery

written by Mary Margaret Hansen | October 18, 2022

The surface of the square wooden table where I sit is sticky with spilled food and beverages. Post brain surgery, I've been lifting plastic forks and spoons and Styrofoam cups to my mouth with a somewhat disabled left hand that is overcoming what they call "meningioma neglect."

(Editor's note: "Meningioma" is a type of brain tumor. "Neglect" refers to the brain's inability to process information from half of one's spatial environment—generally the half opposite the side of the tumor.)

Perhaps today, one task I will set for myself will be to clear this table, wash it clean and then dry it with brown paper towels. Perhaps I will lay out the puzzle a good friend left for me at the gate yesterday. It was in a bag that also held a container clam of chowder from Whole Foods and a zip-lock bag of dry beans and lentils I can use to practice sorting as a physical therapy exercise.

A gentle caregiver with perhaps a Nigerian accent works this early evening shift, and she returns to my apartment from heating the chowder. It is tepid and could use another minute in the microwave. This caregiver is friendly and I like her, so I decide not to send the chowder back for another blast.

Yesterday, someone told me it is possible to have a microwave in this assisted living apartment. When the morning shift arrives, I will ask for one. It will be useful installed next to the small refrigerator I purchased to hold foodstuffs delivered by long-time friends. I remind myself I am eating Holly Hall meals as well as favorite foods delivered almost daily. I am enjoying every mouthful of all this food and may well gain unwanted pounds. I decide not to think about that right now.

Each day here at the Holly Hall Retirement Community, I discover more about its rhythms and routines. Late yesterday, I learned that the two garments I'd worn for sleeping, and which were spotted with spilled food, could be sent to the laundry and then delivered back to me at the end of the same day. As evening approached, I asked about my laundered nightgowns.

"It's too late for delivery today. The laundry closes at 4:00 p.m."

I am momentarily flummoxed. But, then, a solution: "So, I will sleep in a long sleeved shirt tonight." There is no other option.

I tell myself I will read the entire Holly Hall handbook carefully for clues and protocols. Better to know stuff than to stumble onto things piecemeal. Five minutes later, I am suddenly weary and ready for a nap. Perhaps I will not read the handbook just yet.

Perhaps, I will not wash the stickiness off my table, either. I am, however, already looking forward to tomorrow's breakfast of scrambled eggs, two slices

of bacon and black coffee.

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