

“As glimpses of Paul’s old self came back, so too did my love for him”

I was visibly frustrated over Paul misunderstanding something silly, he’d say, “Please go, if this is too much for you”. But I couldn’t do that to him. I couldn’t walk out just because life wasn’t perfect any more.

I knew that, in order to cope, I had to learn to adjust to this new person. I took up yoga to relax and, if Paul was particularly confused, I’d recall the good old days and remind myself to have compassion. Then, as he started to recover and glimpses of his old self came back, so my love for him flooded back, too.

Our grown-up children, Louise, Sally-Ann, David and Amy were all devastated by what had happened to their

dad, so it was hard talking to them about it, but Paul’s speech therapist was a lifeline. Over time – and with a lot of prompts – the speech therapy has helped him to recover much of his reading, writing and communication skills. That’s why the wedding speech was so important.

Paul now plays a lot of golf and tennis, and when I turned 60 in January we celebrated in

New York. There are good and bad days; at dinner parties I’m mindful of Paul getting into a tricky situation while he’s trying to describe something. He might be talking about a cushion but only be able to say, “the square thing with feathers in” and I’ll interject. Some days he can’t process words, and we don’t chat like we used to, as detailed conversations can be taxing.

But, instead of getting angry, I’ve learned to move on.

The stroke has changed us both. I can definitely say I’m a better person for it – more compassionate and caring. Our relationship is as good as it was before, but I no longer take it for granted.’

● *Contact the Stroke Association on 0303 303 3100 or visit stroke.org.uk/aphasia*

PAUL SAYS: ‘I don’t know where I’d be without Marie and the kids. They gave me fantastic encouragement, especially in the early days when I couldn’t talk. I did worry the stroke might affect my marriage; Marie is not one to hide her emotions and I could tell when she was upset. I thought, if I’m screwing up her life then she should get out. But she didn’t agree, obviously, and I’m very lucky.

Deep down we both know we’ve got something special. I have a fantastic wife and I’ve idolised her from day one. My family understand that I’m a different person now, but it’s happened and so I’ve got to get on with life. I was always an optimist, and I’m still an optimist. I’m appreciative of my family more than ever and, with our first grandchild on the way, we have a lot to look forward to.’