

# Along Came A Stroke - Eileen Haas

Eileen Haas experienced a hemorrhagic stroke at age 61 on a beautiful sunny day when she was bringing in the washing from the line. Her book *Along Came A Stroke* is out Oct 2022.

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Transcription:

Eileen Haas 0:00

Well, when you have a stroke or a heart attack or knee injury or anything, you can look at the negative side of it and say, Oh, I've lost this, that, and the other thing, I've lost, I've lost.

Eileen Haas 0:21

But actually, you've also gained, and no one looks at that side, or no one tends to look at that side I think people are afraid. So options means you can choose to look at what is lost, you can choose to look at what you've gained.

Intro 0:50

This is the recovery after stroke podcast with Bill Gasiamis, helping you navigate recovery after stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03

Hello, and welcome to episode 218 of the recovery after stroke podcast now that the episodes have gone beyond 200, I'm getting addicted to seeing 300 episodes, and I'm loving doing these episodes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17

And I want to hear from you, I want your stories, sharing your stories is good for you, and it's good for the rest of the community. Together, we're gonna make a difference to each other.

Bill Gasiamis 1:27

This is how we support each other, and this is how we bridge that gap of feeling alone after a stroke. So if you're a stroke survivor with a story to share about your experience, come and join me on the show.

Bill Gasiamis 1:39

The interviews are not scripted, it's like catching up over a cup of coffee. It's just a chat between two people with something in common you do not have to plan for it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:49

All you need to do to qualify is be a stroke survivor or care for someone who is a stroke survivor or help people who are stroke survivors. If you go to [recoveryafterstroke.com/contact](https://recoveryafterstroke.com/contact) and select be a podcast guest in the drop-down and fill out the contact form.

Bill Gasiamis 2:06

As soon as I receive it, I will respond with more details on how you can choose a time that works for you and me to meet over Zoom. Also, I would love to hear from people that have any stroke-related questions.

Bill Gasiamis 2:18

So I compile some questions and make some shorter episodes that give you my perspective on your burning questions about stroke recovery life, whatever it is, of course, they cannot be medical in nature as I'm not a doctor and cannot comment on your specific situation.

Bill Gasiamis 2:34

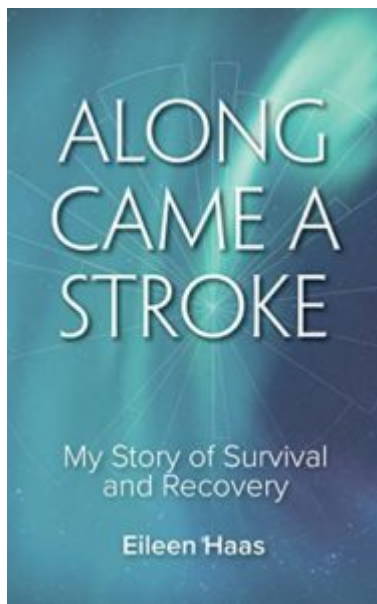
But they can be about stroke-related matters. Once again, if you go to

recoveryafterstroke.com/contact. But this time, select the ask Bill a question drop-down, leave the details in the box with your question.

Bill Gasiamis 2:48

And when I have enough of them I will make an episode dedicated to your questions and hopefully give you an insight into something that you are wanting to know about. And hopefully that'll help you with some clarity or maybe with something else that you are needing right now.

## **Introduction - Along Came A Stroke**



Bill Gasiamis 3:03

My guest today is I learned Haas who was putting away her laundry into the laundry basket when suddenly along came a stroke. Elaine Haas. Welcome to the podcast.

Eileen Haas 3:15

Thank you. I'm so happy to be here. Thank you for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 3:20

My pleasure. Tell me a little bit about your story. How you got to be in the situation you're in.

Eileen Haas 3:30

Well, it just happened. I was going about my life. And it just happen. And it changes everything. Your life is never the same, but you do have one. Having a stroke is like it teaches you alot lot of things.

Eileen Haas 3:57

It teaches you acceptance, which I fought it for about two years. And then I finally accepted. This is the way I am. So while I've gotten much, much better. Still I obviously have deficits that I have to deal with. But over the years I have learned to deal with them.

Bill Gasiamis 4:27

So you were just going about life. What was life like what were you up to before the stroke?

Eileen Haas 4:37

Well, I had a full-time job. I had a bakehouse. I had lots of friends, a busy social life. I travel a lot you know just ordinary stuff. And when I had my stroke, It was a beautiful Saturday morning, the sun was shining. It was cool, but not too cool.

Eileen Haas 5:13

And I was folding laundry in preparation to put it in the linen closet. And as I was folding laundry, I felt something happen in the back of my neck. And it was pretty rapid from then on. I knew I was having a stroke. I knew right away.

Bill Gasiamis 5:40

In 2014, how old were you?

Eileen Haas 5:44

I was 61. And it was 2013. May, you know, it's like it becomes engraved in your memory. It was Memorial Day weekend, 2013 when I had the stroke, and like I said, it changes everything in an instant.

Bill Gasiamis 6:16

Were you home alone?

Eileen Haas 6:17

I was home alone. I was in a really scary situation something everyone thinks should not happen to them. But it does. You know, even if you're living somewhere. Even if you have family, you still have times when everyone is out doing something, and you're home alone and you never, ever think anything's going to happen.

Eileen Haas 6:51

And maybe it won't. Maybe you'll go through life and never have to think about this. But it happened to me. I was alone. And the scariest thing is I had no presence of mind. I couldn't think straight. And I only could remember one phone number.

## **That One Friend - Eileen Haas**

Eileen Haas 7:17

And it wasn't 911 I should have remembered that I should have called it. But I couldn't even think of it. Which is really frightening. So the only phone number I could think of was one of my friend up the street it was a cellphone number. And I knew she had a key to my house. So like I said, I was in a really scary situation. But I did what I had to do.

Bill Gasiamis 8:01

Yeah. So did she answer the phone immediately and come over immediately? Or was there a delay?

Eileen Haas 8:09

You know, it's a miracle that she answered the phone. She never answered the phone. I always get voicemail. And you know, half a me was expecting voicemail.

Eileen Haas 8:24

She picked up immediately. It was amazing. And she started to question me. And I heard her boyfriend in the background screaming, get over there now get over there.

Eileen Haas 8:43

And so she said I'm coming over and she hung up and in a few minutes. She was right up the street. She entered the house. So I was lucky on a lot of friends that I remembered her number, that she picked up which was amazing. And that she came over and took over. She was a very smart and level headed person. And I knew that if anyone could handle that situation, it was her.

Bill Gasiamis 9:23

I love it. You know, sometimes we've got friends who we'd love, but they're unreliable. They never return your calls. They never pick up the phone. But then one day, when they don't know that something is needed. They somehow know to do the right thing exactly the right time.

Bill Gasiamis 9:23

I had friends like that and they came out of nowhere. And it's like you really surprised me in a lovely way. Thank you. It's not like we judge them for their tardiness in responding to messages or calling Yes, it's just that they have a habit. And they continuously do the same thing. And then every once in a while, you get an amazing surprise. And yeah, it sounds like your friend stepped up just when you needed her the most.

Eileen Haas 10:15

I don't know what I would have done if she hadn't to come over. I don't even let myself think about it. I just don't go there. But I would have thought of something. Or maybe not because I backed out soon after. And that was the end.

Bill Gasiamis 10:37

Yeah. Now, when you woke up, you were in hospital? How long did you spend there?

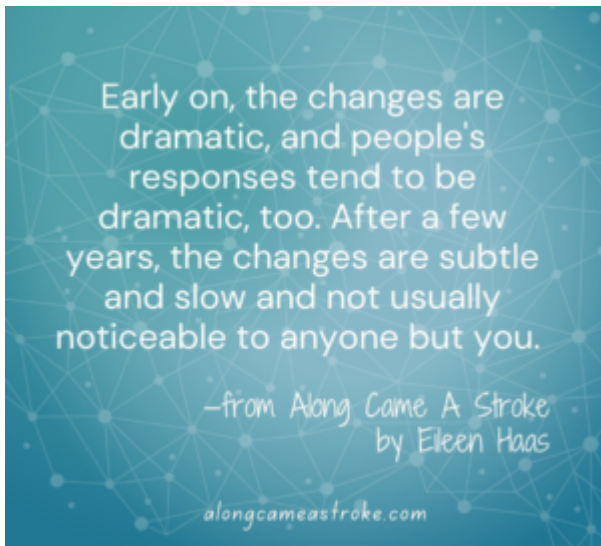
Eileen Haas 10:46

Five weeks, a long time. But, and I don't know how long I was out for. Because whenever I asked people, they miraculously can't remember. You know, that's something I would remember. And everyone says the same thing. Oh, I don't remember.

Eileen Haas 11:12

Yes, you do. You just don't want to tell me. So I leave them alone. But when I came to, which could have been the next day or the next week, or I don't know, I was in ICU. And I don't recall when they moved me to a regular room. I think I was in ICU for just a few days. And they moved me to regular room. And then I was moved to another hospital. A rehab hospital where they really started working me.

## **Eileen Haas' Deficits**



Bill Gasiamis 12:03

And what were the deficits that you were ended up with, after all of this saga.

Eileen Haas 12:09

I ended up with a weak by side, I still have a tremor, and I'm going to see a team of neurologists in December, who supposedly are going to do something about it. So I'm still working on recovering. It's a lifelong process for a lot of people, and you have to develop patience.

Eileen Haas 12:45

So obviously, my voice is greatly affected. And I don't know why no one can tell me why, supposedly well, my vocal cords have not been damaged. But I can't talk properly. And it bothers me the most. But I have gotten better and better and better. So at least I can talk to you now. I can talk to anyone. And I'm not afraid to do that. So even though I know I sound really strange, but I'm understandable.

Bill Gasiamis 13:38

And you can communicate so it's a great thing. I heard of somebody who I met actually, in my hometown in Melbourne, Australia, who had a stroke and their voice changed to a different accent. They were a similar accent to me. And they picked up a I think it was a French accent. And they have no French history or relatives or they don't know French, but they have an accent that sounds like they're a French person. learning to speak English in Australia. It's so bizarre.

Eileen Haas 14:22

Oh, it's very bizarre. My speech therapist told me that I would end up with a European accent and I go what? Are you kidding? I'm American. I was born here. But some people think I'm farming Europe. And I have to laugh when that

happens because I'm not and sometimes I speak with that kind of accent. I know I do.

Bill Gasiamis 14:58

Which part of the United States are you from?

Eileen Haas 15:01

I'm from New York City.

Bill Gasiamis 15:04

Wow. I get it. So your accent is definitely would have been noticeable. You're a New Yorker, there's a special way that New Yorkers talk. And we would've known about it immediately. And now you haven't got that part of you, that you had in the past? Is that a shift in your identity as well? Does that impact how you identify with yourself and how you see yourself?

Eileen Haas 15:31

Actually it has not, I find it amusing. But I'm still who I always was. My voice may be strange, and I may sound European sometimes. But you know, I'm still the person I was before. I have the same interests, the same personality for better or worse. The only thing that's really that have changed about me are physical. Otherwise I have not changed at all. You do change in the beginning, you do change. But eventually, it all comes back.

Bill Gasiamis 16:27

Your self comes back your personality, the way you perceive the world and see the world might alter a little or shift a little but. Your essence remains, doesn't it?

Eileen Haas 16:41

Yes, it does and I have to say, there's a point at which you wish, said these would not come back. And they do and you think, Oh, not that one. And you're kind of stuck. But you know, Is it certain ways that first year or so something gets stripped away. I don't know what to call it. But something is stripped away.

Eileen Haas 17:16

And you connect with people in a way you never had. And it feels really good. But then gradually, that barrier comes back. It comes way back. And there's nothing you can do about it except to bid a fun farewell to the way you enjoyed being.



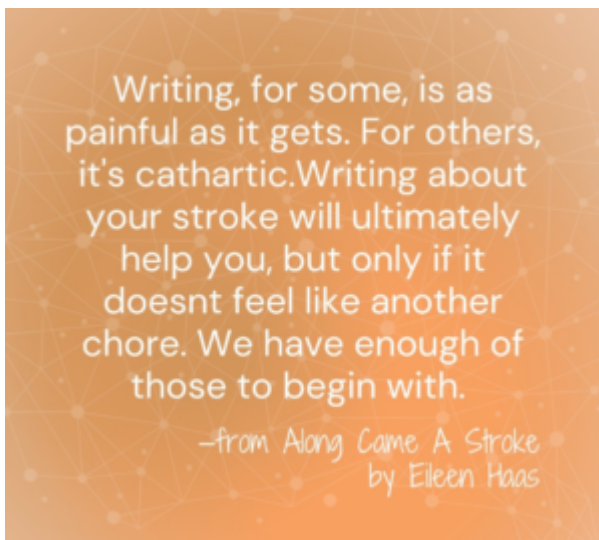
Bill Gasiamis 17:45

Yeah, I understand. So that means that your full-time job was no longer something that you're able to do. And have you been able to get back to work in some way, shape or form any type of work?

Eileen Haas 18:01

Well, no. I had a really good job. And the first year, I was adamant that I was going back to work. And then after a year, I was not going back to work. It took years before I could have gone back to work. And by then my job had been long filled. So I retired early. And the only thing I knew I was really good at was writing. I have always been good at since I was a child. I was good at it. So I thought, well, I'm going to write that book I've been talking about for decades now. And so I did I wrote a book.

## Managing Fatigue - Eileen Haas



Bill Gasiamis 19:07

You had a really interesting experience and topic to talk about now. And plenty of time by the sounds of things.

Eileen Haas 19:18

Yeah, that is interesting. You have a lot of time. But it gets filled. You sleep a lot. I mean, a lot. You're always sleeping, you could go to sleep at any time anyway, you can go to sleep. So all that time that's taken up sleeping. Then later on when you get past that, you spend a lot of time in recovery trying to learn to do things you can no longer do. So you end up with more time. But it gets taken up a lot.

Bill Gasiamis 20:16

And as a result of that, does that mean you have less time or is there less of energy for socializing and for friends and for things that you were doing a lot of before the stroke? Did you find that?

Eileen Haas 20:31

Ah, yes, I found that I couldn't go out as much. I go out, I do the things I used to do, but not as much. And also, I had so much energy. I was like, an endless fountain. And now I get tired. And I realized the point at which I have to stop and rest. And very often, that's it for the day.

Eileen Haas 21:13

Usually, I'm fine to the evening, which is really good. For a long time, I was not. And now I can, it's a slow evolution and recovery and you have to work hard at it. And at some point, I realized that I didn't have the stamina I used to have. So I work I made myself stay up. Two things I went from doing one thing per day to doing two to three to doing four. And, you know, I trained myself to stay up and do things. Otherwise ways, you can easily fall into the habit of just sleeping.

Bill Gasiamis 22:15

Fatigue is generally a very big issue for people who have a brain injury from stroke. And you're describing your level of fatigue and neurological fatigue was very high at the beginning. And it's become better as time has gone on by the sound of it.

Eileen Haas 22:32

It has but I'll tell you it took years to get to the point where I could work on my stamina in, you know, four or five years in this. I took naps during the day. I never took naps in my life. I couldn't even imagine taking a nap. I could not sleep during the day. After the stroke I needed to.

Eileen Haas 23:06

Yeah. Now, I'm at the point where I never never nap anymore. But it took me about six years to get to that point.

Bill Gasiamis 23:24

Yeah, I can relate to that. And a lot of people watching and listening will relate to that. Because sleep and napping is how you recharge your batteries. It's how the brain heal. That's how you're able to reset for the day and go again for a little longer. Before you go to the end of the day, I also couldn't last. Towards the end

of the day, I couldn't last if I hadn't had a nap during the day.

Bill Gasiamis 23:50

And then I would have to be in bed earlier and potentially miss out on an opportunity to go somewhere or catch up with some friends. So and that was really helpful and made me feel a lot better. And it was necessary as essential without the I couldn't operate. Now, travel what about travel? Have you been able to travel since then? Is it something on the to do list?

Eileen Haas 24:23

I have traveled across the country many times. So I can go to the airport and walk to the terminals and do all that stuff. I can't say it's pleasant, but it has nothing to do with having a stroke it's just unpleasant. But yes, I can travel and I have traveled. I'm taking a hiatus right now because I moved so much. I finally decided to stay in one place for a while.

Eileen Haas 25:04

So I've stopped traveling. I'm going to do some more. And it's interesting. I'm going to take a long car drive next month, and all my friends are really worried about me. Can I drive for four hours? Five hours can I really do that? Are you sure? They keep asking me are you sure you can do that? And yeah, I am. I have done it before. So I don't have any compunctions about that. But you know, people treat you differently. They really do.

Bill Gasiamis 25:52

They're afraid that you are somehow more vulnerable. And they feel like you're not a good judge of your own abilities. And therefore they get worried or overly concerned or worried unnecessarily, sometimes, but sometimes legitimately, and they're trying to look out for you, and they don't know how else to look out for you. And that's the best they can do. So they try to ask a lot of questions and see if you will answer the appropriate way or the correct way.

Eileen Haas 26:31

Sounds like you have a lot of experience with this.

## **Importance Of Setting Boundaries**

Bill Gasiamis 26:38

I do, a large Greek family and a lot of love and care, sometimes too much love and

care. Not that there's such a thing, I don't think there is. But yes, at some point boundaries are necessary, you need to start creating boundaries, and re-educating people that you're going to be okay and that you need them to give you the space so that you can relearn your boundaries and relearn what your capabilities are, and do all those things that you need to do.

Bill Gasiamis 27:10

And it took me many years to convince them. And fair enough because I did. Why wasn't my my old self and I went through three years of three brain hemorrhages, and then brain surgery, and then recovery for another two or three years after that.

Bill Gasiamis 27:29

So it was about a six year saga. Before I started to feel like you that I've come around to the other side where my life is starting to have some kind of routine and normality and things that are not related to hospital visits all the time or rehabilitation visits all the time.

Bill Gasiamis 27:50

Even though I still had the one checkup a year, even though I still consider myself in recovery. You know, that intense version of always, in doctor's offices, etc. ended. And when that ended, I kind of felt like, oh, okay, so now I've got some time for me to go to do the things that I want to do again. as well. What was it that caused the hemorrhage in your brain or back of your head? Where was it? Exactly?

Eileen Haas 28:29

I know my cerebellum was wiped out. And that apparently is the seat of language and movement. So while I am lucky and you are too that my frontal lobes were not affected at all.

Intro 28:50

If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time it can be, you're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind. Like how long will it take to recover? Will I actually recover? What things should I avoid? In case I make matters worse, and doctors will explain things that obviously, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask.

Intro 29:14

If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation stop worrying, and head to [recoveryafterstroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com) where you can download a guide that will help you it's called the seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke.

Intro 29:34

These seven questions are the ones Bill wished he'd asked when he was recovering from a stroke. They'll not only help you better understand your condition and they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery. Head to the website. Now [recoveryafterstroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com) and download the guide. It's free.

Eileen Haas 29:52

I obviously am very affected or somewhat affected by my stroke. So what caused it? Doctors never told me they never do. All they told me was, we don't know. They can't even agree if I had an aneurysm that burst or blood vessel that was weak they we're not sure.

Eileen Haas 30:25

And, you know, I met the point where it kind of doesn't matter. Something terrible happened in my head that's all I know. But doctors don't know that much about the brain. As you probably know, they are just now really studying hard. So I think in a few years, they'll know a lot more. But right now, they just don't know.

Bill Gasiamis 31:05

It's a very complicated organ. In fact, probably the most complicated of them all. And it is just such a weird and bizarre thing to look at, and try to unwrap and determine, like, what goes on in between those little squishy bits, you know, it's really weird. It's not like a heart. It's not like the liver. It's not like the kidney, there's a lot of stuff in there that I think it's impossible to look at and say actually, how does it all work?

Bill Gasiamis 31:39

Because it works with electrical signals and charges. More so than with physical parts, you know, it is a big physical thing. But I think the brain exists to create a space for electrical components and parts to flow through, you know, the neurons and all the things that create all our abilities to move, talk, look, see move.

Bill Gasiamis 31:39

And it's different from a pump, which the heart is it has, you know, parts that physically move, they go up and down, and they suck oxygen in and they send oxygen away, and then they recycle it. And it's like, the brain doesn't have so many moving parts, this solid blob of a thing. And it's weird. So it makes sense that they don't know about it. But yes, of course, we'd love them to know more about it.

Eileen Haas 32:38

Where did you have your hemorrhages?

Bill Gasiamis 32:42

Near the cerebellum. So it has impacted my left side. And it has impacted my balance a little. And it was kind of in a faulty blood vessel that burst an arteriovenous malformation AVM they call them. So it's different from an aneurysm. And it was something I was born with. And it was bleeding over a long period of time. So the first time it was bleeding over seven days.

Bill Gasiamis 33:15

And then they tell me that I was having microbleeds for a good two and a half years before we finally removed that. And every once in a while I would have some really strange or scary episodes where I would get fuzzy. I didn't know where I was or what I was doing. I didn't recognize my wife at one point.

Bill Gasiamis 33:35

So there was a whole bunch of weird things that were happening over these two and a half years and then I had the surgery and removed the faulty blood vessel so it can no longer bleed because it's not there anymore. But it is good. And it was near the cerebellum. So I was lucky that it wasn't the cerebellum that was impacted directly. It was secondary impact there. So did you have surgery to fix the blood vessel?

Eileen Haas 34:06

I had surgery. I actually don't know what kind of surgery I had. I think I had a craniotomy. I think the neurosurgeon who I met, but I was so out of it poor guy. I think he operated on me to release a pressure that had built up in my brain for the blood vessel. They didn't say anything about it. So I don't know if they repaired them or if it's been bypassed or what, I actually don't know all that maybe I should. But you know, it's not going to change anything. It's really not.

Bill Gasiamis 35:13

I love your attitude. I mean, how would be dying to know, I would want to know every detail. What did they do? How did they do that? And I'm just shocked, not that I need you to have a different point of view. I'm shocked that you don't know if you had a craniotomy or not, that's a pretty dramatic thing.

Eileen Haas 35:35

I asked many times, what happened to me, what happened inside my head, and all other doctors say, well, we're not exactly sure. That was a terrible answer. And they probably did tell me what I had. I have just forgotten.

Bill Gasiamis 36:04

Yeah. Fair enough. I understand.

Eileen Haas 36:08

Because at some point, you just don't remember a lot. You just don't. I think they give you drugs. So you don't remember. That's what I think. But who knows?

## Along Came A Stroke



Bill Gasiamis 36:24

Potentially. So you put a lot of effort into writing your book. And it isn't yet released. But it will be soon people can preorder it. It's forthcoming release date is October the 11th 2022. And the book is called Along Came A Stroke. Tell me a little bit about the about the book, what it does, how does it take people through your story?

Eileen Haas 36:56

Well, I tell my entire story, as I remember it, but don't hold me to everything. Because I may have gotten something wrong. It is kind of upsetting in the beginning it was very hard to write. Because I had to relive everything that happened to me.

Eileen Haas 37:28

And I didn't want to, I really did not want to go there. But I had to and during my recovery, which took years and I'm still recovering. And I probably will be for many more years. Some funny things happen to me, some unexpected things happened to me. And I sort of learned a lot as I went along.

Eileen Haas 38:03

And so I ended up writing this book to let people know what I learned how people react to you, and what you can do to make things better for yourself. And that recovery will not happen fast. Like you wish it would. Everyone wishes they could just learn something in a day.

Eileen Haas 38:35

No, it may take three years to learn that one little thing. But you have to have a really good attitude. So I wrote this book to take people through what happened to me and how I've covered and the things I've learned, the things that helped me recover from my stroke and are still helping me, and how patient I've learned to become because I was not a patient person.

Eileen Haas 39:18

No way. But do you learn patience because it's not going to happen overnight. And doing something a hundred times is not going to make it better. It really isn't. You'll end up hurting yourself. But a lot of books about strokes emphasize the brain and what happens and takes people through the scientific explanation of what happened to them, and how they can recover scientifically, and all of that.

Eileen Haas 40:08

But I'm not a scientist, I find it fascinating. I think science is great. But that's not my bent. And also, when you have a stroke is like science will not help you. It really will not help us learn to walk, though to talk, to use the bath side all those things, science is not going to help you, it's great to know why.

Eileen Haas 40:44



And to understand what happened to you, it is really great. But from then on, it's up to you to help yourself get better. And so other things went through my mind. And I talked to a number of people who have had strokes, and found that they really didn't know what I had figured out. So I ended up writing this book to help them all.

Bill Gasiamis 41:21

So it's a bit of a guide, as well as a recollection of your story.

Eileen Haas 41:25

It's both a guide and recollection. Yes.

Bill Gasiamis 41:30

You know, that part where you had to go back and relive the traumatic experience of the stroke? Was it later on did it become therapeutic? Was it good to download that onto the pages and get it out of you, so that it no longer sits in that place where it was causing you trauma or difficult emotions or uncomfortable feelings? Was it good to get it out of your head and download it onto a book?

Eileen Haas 42:04

It was, it was really good. Get it down on paper. And I thought that's it, I'm never going there again. And I felt that they didn't need to. That felt really good. What I'm concentrating on most now is they say if you've had a stroke, I don't know if you've heard this, you're more likely to have another one. So that's my focus now.

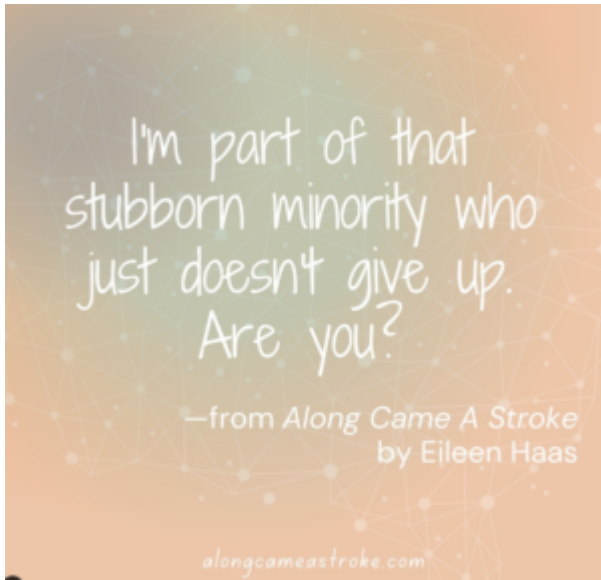
Bill Gasiamis 42:45

Avoiding another one.

Eileen Haas 42:47

Avoiding another one. Although I had a neurologist tell me that I will never have another stroke, because the type I had, it will never happen again. So maybe she's right. I can only hope.

## **Avoiding Another Stroke**



Bill Gasiamis 43:11

Yeah. And some steps to prevent another one, or at least to play a role in being healthy as possible. And to avoid another one. I think there's really a smart move. That's basically my approach now is that, although the blood vessel is no longer there, and it can't bleed again, I don't want to be responsible for contributing to another one down the road.

Bill Gasiamis 43:34

And making myself and doing something wrong by myself. You know, it's about protecting myself and learning from what happens so that I don't create an environment where a stroke might happen. And that's exactly the approach. I don't want to be responsible for doing that to myself. It's a terrible thing to be responsible for. So the book, how long did it take to write?

Eileen Haas 44:12

About two or three years. I wrote half of it really fast. And then I put it away for a while. It was a friend who encouraged me to write the second half.

Bill Gasiamis 44:30

Why did you put it away?

Eileen Haas 44:34

I felt that I had said everything there was to say, and it wasn't long enough. And I thought, well, why should I make up things that didn't really happen? And I found that waning the second half I had a lot more to say, and I could have written more and it was my publisher who stopped me said enough, enough, it's good leave it. So yeah, that's what happened. And but I put it away because I thought I was

done. And I was not done.

Bill Gasiamis 45:19

You just probably needed to leave those additional experiences and have that additional time to dwell on what had happened and how far you've come. So you can develop your story further by the sound of it.

Eileen Haas 45:34

It's true. Every day brings something new and different, that I wasn't expecting. And I learned something about myself. So it's like, your whole life. You learn until you die, you learn, you're always learning. And it's the same with writing a book. There's always something more to say. Always something new that happened to you, that you can talk about. But it did take a long time. And I think for most writers, it takes a long time.

Bill Gasiamis 46:29

Was it good to have a long project for you to have something to focus on for such a long amount of time, even though you had a gap where you let it go and you weren't doing much? Was it good to have something to go back to and to complete? And what does it feel like when you complete the manuscript and you hand it over and you've got this thing? You know, that you did, even though you're going through a difficult time because of the stroke?

Eileen Haas 47:01

Well, it's good and bad, I feel that I can still do something, I can still contribute, I can still write. And that has not gone away. And I hope it never does, because I really enjoy it. So in that sense, it was a good thing. And also, I knew I wasn't going back to work. I mean, this was pre COVID, so I thought who will hire me? No one.

Eileen Haas 47:40

So I just wrote a book. And it felt really good. It felt so great to know, I could still do something. And it was long term. And when I finally finished it and found a publisher, which was pretty fast. I was relieved, I felt good. It's like I didn't feel I mean, you always have the feeling that Oh, I could have written more, I didn't cover this up there, there's always more you could have done.

Eileen Haas 48:27

But if I had been like that, I would still have the book unfinished. And at some

point, you have to just say, Okay, I'm done for now. I'm done. But it wasn't hard to give it up to someone else. I know a lot of writers have a problem. They feel like it's their baby. And they're just not giving it to someone else. But I never felt that way. It felt good and right to hand it over to somewhere else. It was like I finally finished.

Bill Gasiamis 49:13

Yeah, I relief by the sound of it. So I'm looking at the Barnes and Noble page where the book is, has been listed online. And it has an overview of the book it says Along Came A Stroke recounts Eileen Haas' personal experience from the instant her stroke occurred through her subsequent hospitalization, rehab and beyond. This remarkable and inspiring story is recounted with humor, triumph, and honesty. Haas' indomitable spirit and keen insights shine throughout and will encourage anyone facing a life changing event.

Eileen Haas 50:01

I've had people read the manuscript who never had a stroke, and they loved it. Because everyone's had something. Maybe it wasn't a stroke. Maybe it was cancer, maybe it was a heart attack. Maybe it was a lung problem, whatever, people, almost everyone has had something. And they all relate to having been really sick. And having gotten well. That feels really good.

Bill Gasiamis 50:49

Yeah, it's relatable to everybody. Because although we've been through different experiences in life, or health concerns, or whatever the underlying issues are there for everybody. You know, people's vulnerability, people's loss of mobility, people's loss of identity, people's loss of did their sense of self, all these things do occur to people who experience a whole bunch of different conditions.

Bill Gasiamis 51:17

And as a result of that, we've got a lot in common. There's similarities there with people who are not stroke survivors, and survivors of something else. So it's good when a book can be about stroke and but then applicable to anybody and everybody. Because strokes, just the thing that makes your story unique to you, you can say, well, these are the things I learned because of stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 51:44

And I wonder if they're similar to the things you learned because of cancer, or you

learn because of a knee injury or a foot injury or a leg injury, who knows. But I love how it bridges the gap, and covers people who are not stroke survivors. That's really cool. The reviews on your page at [alongcameastroke.com/book](http://alongcameastroke.com/book) say a beautiful memoir, a wonderful book that people of all ages can learn from.

Bill Gasiamis 52:18

Another one says informative, engaging, and darkly funny. A Long Came A Stroke is a recovery memoir everyone needs. And then the Midwest book review says readers to include not just stroke survivors, but anyone interested in the nuts and bolts of returning to normalcy after a life altering experience must place a long kind of stroke at the top of their reading list. Ideally, it will become an active part of book clubs and reading groups devoted to recovery, healing and better understanding the processes of optional survival. That's an amazing review.

Eileen Haas 53:00

Thank you. I'm happy about them.

## The Options Of Survival - Eileen Haas



Bill Gasiamis 53:09

They really say a lot. That last one specifically. The next phase of the book, you know, this person who wrote that sees it as something that needs to be part of book clubs and reading groups devoted to healing and better understanding of the processes and options of survival. That's interesting, that last part options of survival, what is that? What are the options of survival? Specifically, what does it mean to you?

Eileen Haas 53:37

Well, when you have a stroke, or a heart attack, or knee injury or anything, you can look at the negative side of it and say, Oh, I've lost this, that and the other thing, I've lost, I've lost, I've lost. But actually, you've also gained and no one looks at that side, or no one tends to look at that side. I think people are afraid.

Eileen Haas 54:12

So options means you can choose to look at what you've lost. You can choose to look at what you've gained. And be positive about it. Yes, you have lost you have. I'm aware. And I wouldn't say I haven't I have, but I've also gained some really valuable things that cannot be measured.

Eileen Haas 54:45

Yes, I talk funny. But you know what? I'm really calm about things now. Nothing gets me excited. I feel like I've been to the worst and come out the other side and so what are you telling me something bad happened to you today? Okay, you know, I don't think it's a big deal.

Eileen Haas 55:11

So all these are choices, and if you choose to get better, you have the option of choosing to really get better become a better person, or you have the option to focus on what you lost, and will never regain. And, you're not going to change. And all those things are choices. And you have to, you have to make a choice, you have to.

Bill Gasiamis 55:57

What are some of the things that you have gained? Have you gained the ability to choose better? Is that something that you've gained?

Eileen Haas 56:06

I think I've gained perspective, I've become I hope, a better person. Like I said, I'm calm about things, I don't get all upset about little things anymore, you know, who cares. And before I would have gotten very upset. So I have gained, and I feel like I'm a wiser person, I'm a better person, I'm a calmer person.

Eileen Haas 56:43

And those are really big things to have gained, you know, you can't compare that to having lost like, my normal voice. I still haven't gotten it back and I may never get it back. But you know, I have come to the point where I am happy that I can

talk at all. And I can communicate. So that's what I mean about options and keep coming better. It's like, you really do have choice.

Bill Gasiamis 57:25

Yeah. And you said you became a better person. So what specifically does that mean? Yes, you make better choices now. Or you have a better ability to talk and all that kind of stuff. But I feel like you're talking about something deeper, that you specifically are better as a person, than you thought you were earlier on before the stroke. Doesn't sound like you're a terrible person. But it sounds like you've improved as a person is that right?

Eileen Haas 57:54

I think you gain compassion for other people, for the first time, I found that I could really commiserate with people and see how they were struggling and see how they were bothered by things. And I became more empathetic. It's like, I don't blame people as much as I used to.

Eileen Haas 58:26

And you know, you have a certain arrogance, when nothing has happened to you. And you don't think so, you don't feel it. But you don't realize until something does happen, that you can be a different person and you can be a better person. Even though this awful thing has happened to you. It's made you softer.

Bill Gasiamis 59:00

Yeah. And arrogance, less arrogance is a really good thing. I think

Eileen Haas 59:06

It's a really good thing to become happier actually. As you become more empathetic and understanding of others, I think you'll become a happier person.

Bill Gasiamis 59:22

Yeah, I do definitely understand people but you know, I spent some time in a wheelchair. So I completely now realize that being in a wheelchair is not just the fact that your legs don't work, it means so many more things than that. And that people in a wheelchair are not just sitting down and that's not easy to do, to be sitting down all the time. And that was kind of what opened my eyes the first time to the plight of other people. And then it's like, "Ah, okay, all right."

Bill Gasiamis 59:57

Now you know what it's like to be anything other than somebody who walks perfectly on two legs, and doesn't even think about their legs ever, and doesn't even consider running upstairs or any of that stuff. Now you know what it's like. So that's interesting that I discovered, that I was that naive, and I was that unaware, but I just didn't realize how much, I didn't know how much I was ignorant about things that were all around me all day every day, in communities, in buses, in trains, in shopping malls, in just general life.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:45

And for me, I was so unaware of it. And I'm not sure that it was terrible that I was unaware of it, I had just no lived experience or couldn't relate to it. But now I can. And I'm glad that I can relate to it. Because that makes me more caring about other people. And it makes it possible for me to notice when somebody needs a little bit of help, and reach out to them at the right time, instead of the wrong time and assume that they're not capable.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:23

It's that thing that we said about before, you know, where people over, assume that they think that you're not capable. So they try and help from that perspective. But for me, it's more about actually, I think I know when I need to help you, I think I can tell better, and give you space until you're ready for the help that you need. So it's been really interesting for me as well.

Eileen Haas 1:01:53

Now I also was in a wheelchair. And now when I see someone in a wheelchair, I smile and say hello. Because I know what it's like to sit in that chair. So yeah, you do become a different person and a better person.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:21

Yeah. So I will have all the links to your book, your social media, on the show notes that people can go to, they can go to [recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes](https://recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes). And they can download the show notes. And from there, they'll be able to get your links to go to the book. But it is available on Amazon for preorder, I believe. And you can get a copy of the Kindle for I think under \$10 or something like that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:54

And a copy of the paperback for under \$20. And it sounds like it's going to be really worthwhile for people to pick up and read. It's about 258 pages. So it's not



a novel by any stretch of the imagination sounds like it's just short and sweet. And going to be like a really lovely easy read.

Eileen Haas 1:03:17

I hope so. That was my intention.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:25

Yeah. I think you've achieved that.

Eileen Haas 1:03:27

Because people who have had strokes often have a hard time reading. So I purposely made it easy to read and easy to follow, for people who have had strokes to be able to read it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:48

Yeah, I love reading. But pages in books are difficult for me. And I prefer the audio books. So I wonder if maybe you'll be able to get somebody to do an audio book for you at some point.

Eileen Haas 1:04:08

My publisher says she is looking into it so I have to nudge her gently again and see if she can get the ball going on that. I agree with you. I think an audio version would be great for people.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:30

There is a stroke survivor who has been on my podcast, who does voiceover work a female. She's a lovely lady. And what I might do is put you in touch with her just so you guys can start the conversation and perhaps maybe you can learn about the process that is necessary. And if you'd be happy for me to do that, I'll do that. I'll set that up just so you guys can chat about I'm sure she'd love to share some of the things that you might not know that you need to know about that.

Eileen Haas 1:05:06

That would be great. Thank you so much.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:09

My pleasure. Thank you so much for coming on to the podcast reaching out, I really wish you the best of luck with your recovery and also with the book. And I look forward to following your story from here on.

Eileen Haas 1:05:23

Okay, thank you so much.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:26

Well, thanks for joining us on today's episode to learn more about my guests, including their links to their social media profiles, and other pages and to download a full transcript of the entire interview. Please go to [recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes](https://recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes).

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:41

If you'd like to support this podcast, the best way to do it and the way that I am going to really, really really appreciate it is to leave a five star review and a few words about what the show means to you on iTunes, and Spotify. If you're watching on YouTube comment below the video.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:56

Like the episode, subscribe to the channel hit the notifications bell to be updated and to be notified of future episodes as they become available. Sharing the show with family and friends and social media will make it possible for people who may need this type of content to find it easier.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:14

And that may make a massive difference to somebody that is on the way to recovery after stroke. And I will really really appreciate it. Thank you so much for listening for being here again for making this show worthwhile for leaving me amazing comments and telling me how much you love the episodes I truly appreciate you see you on the next episode.

Intro 1:06:33

Importantly, we present many podcasts designed to give you an insight and understanding into the experiences of other individuals. The opinions and treatment protocols discussed during any podcast are the individual's own experience and we do not necessarily share the same opinion nor do we recommend any treatment protocol discussed.

Intro 1:06:50

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intended to complement your medical treatment and support healing.

Intro 1:07:07

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Intro 1:07:27

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Intro 1:07:41

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Intro 1:07:57

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