

High Blood Pressure Caused a Stroke - Joe Borges

4 years ago, Joe Borges was living an unhealthy life, ignoring all the signs that led to him suffering a hemorrhagic stroke, caused by high blood pressure.

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www.youtube.com

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Joe 0:19

It was just one side, which is weird. The Walking the physical stuff came back a few months because I'm a very impatient person. Patience was never one of my virtues. And I wanted to when I was doing outpatient physical therapy, I didn't just want to walk I wanted to run. I didn't just want to run I wanted to sprint. So I

was very impatient. My physical therapist gave me the best advice and it saved my recovery. He said, Look, you have to have patience, or you will forever be a patient.

Intro 0:54

This is recovery after stroke with Bill Gasiamis helping you go from where you are to where you'd rather be.

Bill 1:01

Bill for recoveryafterstroke.com. This is Episode 98 and my guest today is Joe Borges. Joe experienced a hemorrhagic stroke caused by undiagnosed high blood pressure. With Lauren Manzano, Joe is also the co-host of the Neuro Nerds podcast. This is a high-energy episode and I feel like I found my soul brother in Joe. We share a lot of the same ideas and passions and both of us are motivated by our desire to make a difference to you guys, the carers, and stroke survivors.

Bill 1:32

Now just before we got started some time ago, I launched the recovery after stroke coaching. It's helpful for people who feel like they aren't getting the support they need once they are sent home from the hospital, especially in this time of Coronavirus isolation. Getting support to stay on track with your recovery has never been more important.

Bill 1:52

So if you're a stroke survivor who wants to know how to heal your brain, overcome fatigue, and reduce anxiety recovery after stroke coaching might be for you, if you have fallen in the cracks between hospital and home care, and desire to gain momentum in your recovery and did not know where to start, this is where I can help I will coach you and help you gain clarity on where you are currently in your recovery journey.

Bill 2:16

I'll help you create a picture of where you would like to be in your recovery 12 months from now, and I will coach you to overcome what's stopping you from getting to your goal. Right now for everyone interested in learning what recovery after stroke coaching is about, you'll get a seven-day free trial to decide if it's the right fit for you. So take advantage of the seven-day free trial now by clicking on the link below if you're watching on Zoom, or by going to

recoveryafterstroke.com/coaching if you are listening online, and now it's on with the show.

Bill 2:49

Joe Borges welcome to the podcast.

Joe 2:51

Hey, thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

Bill 2:54

Yeah, thanks for being here. I have been following you on Instagram for a little bit and I've started to get a little more and more curious about you and the things that you do. So we'll talk about that in a little bit. But right now, can you tell me a little bit about what happened to you first? Like the stroke.

Hemorrhagic Stroke caused by high blood pressure



Joe 3:13

How did I have my stroke? Yeah. Okay, so on August 4, 2016, I suffered a major hemorrhagic stroke, high blood pressure induced, I had no idea that I had high blood pressure. I just thought that I had migraines. So migraines ran at my family, and I was just like oh, I guess it's just my turn. Turns out it was just high unchecked high blood pressure. So I'm very thankful I made it because from what I understand, I probably shouldn't have.

Bill 3:44

So did you have other than those headaches those regular headaches that you got that you described as migraines? Did you have any other signs leading up to the actual stroke?

Joe 3:56

Oh, yeah, for sure. All the stuff that the doctor says like, look out for I had, I grew up very poor. So we didn't necessarily go to the doctors, we just dealt with it. Or it got bad enough went to the emergency room, there was no in-between. I didn't even know what urgent care was until about two years ago.

Joe 4:15

So I had incredible neck pain. And from what I understand, you shouldn't it shouldn't be for more than a day or so if you slept wrong. I had this intense, incredible neck pain for at least two decades. And the same thing I had sore knees. So apparently that was a sign too like, yeah, you have like this pain in your knee.

Joe 4:38

I had an old basketball, college basketball injury. And I was just like, Oh, it's just my knees. It's just this is how it feels to walk. No, these were all telltale signs of my body saying, Look at me. something bad's gonna happen if you don't do anything different. Unfortunately, I didn't do anything different and something bad happened.

Bill 4:52

But in your defense, you're male as well. So like we have that thing that we do. Where nothing matters or is always important, or is relevant or is worth looking into.

Joe 5:03

Right? So yes, I'm a dude. Also, I was an athlete, so I rubbed some dirt on it and walked it off. It's fine. You know, I had that mindset. And yeah, it caught up to me though. And then I realized, oh, wow, this is not how normal people are doing, quote, fingers this is that how normal people function day to day, you shouldn't have 16-hour migraines two, three times a week. You shouldn't be vomiting in the shower because another headache hit. And that went on for a solid I'd say three to four years that was happening every single week three, four times. I'm suffering from debilitating migraines. And it was my body giving me a warning

and I completely ignored it.

Bill 5:42

Yeah. And that is so bizarre though because that was your normal and that's the thing that I had normal my normal was overworking and overdoing all these things, not paying attention to any of the signs, and making up my narrative as to why all these things were happening to me. When the numbness because I had a hemorrhagic stroke, when the numbness went from my big left toe to the entire left side of my body, I argued with the person telling me to go to the hospital, because I was telling them, Man, I can't go to the hospital because I've got to work tomorrow.

Bill 6:17

And if I go to the hospital, you know what's gonna happen, they're not gonna let me out. And I'll be there the whole weekend, and I got work but it's just numbness.

Joe 6:28

It's funny how you justify these things, you know, especially at the time where like, everything you were doing at the time, that was the most important thing, nothing else mattered, but it's funny how a stroke it'll rectify that it'll let you know what's truly important. You know, I was when I I knew the second the vessel burst in my brain. I remember the actual split second because I had suffered migraines forever.

Joe 6:52

This was like the migraine of all this like the Michael Jordan of migraines. This was just like the peak. This was it and that was right up here. And I just had I couldn't even focus. And my girlfriend, she's a musician, and she had a show. And I was there. Her dad just so happened to be in town too. So we went to the show. And from the parking lot to the show, it bursts, I was having trouble walking, and I was having trouble focusing and I felt it.

Joe 7:18

And if you've ever been a dumb kid like me, and you put like a key in a socket, there's like an electric current that goes through your finger up through your arm or your body. I felt that feeling in every fiber of my body, and everything. So what's funny is for a split second, the migraine went away. I was like, oh, yeah,

that felt good. And then a second later, I completely forgot how to walk.

Joe 7:43

My body felt like jelly. And I said something alarming to my girlfriend's father, where I said, I feel like I'm learning how to walk again. Because I did I felt like a baby deer just learning how to walk. And this is so you said, you know me being a male. It gets so much worse. I looked horrible. So they're like, well, maybe we should just go home. And I'm like, no, no, I want to see you perform like, let's do this. I get there. The first thing I do is order a beer.

Joe 8:09

That's a great idea. And then I was like, Man, this headache, it's just not going away. So something that you probably just shouldn't do period. Like, just taking aspirin is aspirin, and alcohol goes together. Great. So I haven't had an aspirin. I had a beer too. And then I just dealt with it. And then after the show, we're on our way home. And well, you know, how are you feeling? Should we go to the doctor? I'm like, No, No, I'm fine. I'm fine.

Joe 8:34

And I'm almost insulted that people are worrying about me, telling me that I should go to the doctor. I dealt with it. I was I ended up throwing up and it was I was throwing up basically, I was throwing up blood and I had a burger. So it was just no I'm throwing up the red meat. That's that's what it is. Again, I'm justifying what these things are happening.

Joe 8:53

And my girlfriend's worried about me. Her dad's worried about me and I'm starting to do weird things where she was teaching a vocal lesson the next morning because this went through the night. And I was just throwing up nonstop. And I was in the bedroom. She's like, okay well go lay down in the living room I'll do the vocal lesson, and hopefully you'll feel better.

Joe 9:10

And she came out and I was standing in the kitchen. And she said I thought I told you to lay down a living room. And I said, apparently not in a very nice way. I am in the living room. So she was like, oh, something's wrong. I was just standing in the kitchen like a lunatic. So her dad made a few calls and talked to her uncle who had like a brain thing.

Joe 9:29

And he's like everything you're describing. He called 911 immediately. And I resisted the entire time. I don't remember any of this. For the moment I got home. I don't remember much for the next two months. But apparently, I wasn't very nice. So that sucks. I was pretty mean and I was very resistant to going to the hospital.

Bill 9:47

I think we need to come up with a new T-shirt. You know somebody that says I'm such a freakin idiot. I'm so stupid. That it's a miracle that I'm here is that possible for us to create, collaborate, and create something I'm that stupid, but I made it something like it's a miracle. I don't know.

Joe 10:05

Do you know what might be the next neuro nerd t-shirt that seems like it has legs? I would wear that daily.

I am a walking miracle after having a hemorrhagic stroke



Today we'd like to introduce you to Joe Borges.

Joe, let's start with your story. We'd love to hear how you got started and how the

Bill 10:13

Man, that's hilarious. So what happened then like, learning how to walk again, what was all that stuff? In your future? What happened?

Joe 10:23

So here's what's crazy about my stroke. So you're familiar with hemorrhagic strokes and the survival rate is low. We are some of the luckiest people in the world. And the people that make it survived, which is very few, their physical death and mental deficits are severe. I am a walking miracle as has been told to me by several doctors, and neurologists.

Joe 10:51

Recently wait let me say this right, because I always say it weirdly. My girlfriend didn't marry her brother. She officiated her brother's wedding. So at the wedding, two people worked in the neuro field. They knew all about me and I walked over to introduce myself and they were looking at me like I was an alien.

Joe 11:10

They were just really like focusing in and like, oh my gosh, and I was like, hey, is everything okay? And they're like, but you're walking and talking and you're, you're at full motion and you're here and I'm like, yeah, and they're like, yeah, that shouldn't be. I was like, oh, okay, so it just hammers in how serious it was and how blessed I am to be here as functional as I am.

Joe 11:31

Physically. I didn't have very many deficits. I suffer from tremors in my right hand. And so I was sloppy anyway, so it's not a big deal. All of my stuff is cognitive. It's a memory loss. I suffer from short-term memory loss, which is the worst. And yeah, but that's about it. You know, I'm working on that every single day and my hand is getting better with occupational therapy for about two to three years.

Left side neglect caused by stroke

Joe 11:58

I was in the hospital. I did suffer left side neglect for I forget exactly how long but I didn't acknowledge that I had a left side, even when I would draw something, I would draw only the right side of the picture. So they told me to draw a clock and I would draw one side of a clock. And they would say, what about the other side? Okay, what are you talking about? It wouldn't connect like that's the whole clock. It was just one side, which is weird.

Joe 12:20

The walking and the physical stuff came back a few months ago because I'm a very impatient person. Patience was never one of my virtues. And I wanted to when I was doing outpatient physical therapy, I didn't just want to walk I wanted to run. I didn't just want to run I wanted to sprint. So I was very impatient. My physical therapist gave me the best advice and it saved my recovery.

Joe 12:44

He said, look, because I don't like doctors. I don't like the hospital. I just don't, it's not my thing. And he said, look, you have to have patience, or you will forever be a patient. I was like, oh, like that hit me that like stuck to my soul ever since then I have, you know, more patience than I've ever had in my life. And I think it's helped me get to the point that I'm at right now.

Joe 13:06

You know, I did physical therapy for two years, and I did occupational therapy for about three and a half years. I just stopped that recently. And it was it's, it's weird, because, you know, it's part of my rhythm. And I think you I would say, I don't speak for you, but like, routine is kind of everything for a brain injury survivor. And once that routine was broken, I just went into panic mode. So I had to figure out like a whole new routine but you know, I'm working on it. I'm working on progress, just like the rest.

Bill 13:34

Yeah, that routine thing is interesting because I did enjoy the routine, but then it got too much. There were three visits a week to therapists, and then there were other appointments and I was like, freaking hell man. This is taking up so much of my time, like I want to do other stuff and I don't want to do that anymore.

Bill 13:53

And I remember one of my last sessions at, like, outpatient occupational therapy. Like I said to the guys, like with all due respect, like you guys are sack, like, I'm not interested in coming here anymore, I'm taking responsibility for the rest of my recovery. It takes too long, it takes me an hour to get here. And then I've got to be here for an hour, and then I got to go out of our home for an hour.

Bill 14:13

My whole days wasted, you know, forget about it. And that was a turning point for me. And, I hadn't completely fully recovered, but I achieved the last thing that I wanted to achieve, which was to feel comfortable about running, and not a marathon just across the road to get away from cars, you know, when I'm crossing the road and when I achieved that, I felt like, alright, now I feel safe to get back out and to be on my own, going for a walk or wherever.

Bill 14:42

So I sacked them, and they were very pleased. And I was excited because I had time to myself again, you know, and that's what I did. I started to put more time into my projects and my passion. And this is kind of how the podcast emerged. And then I just found myself doing everything around my podcast and coaching people and doing all that kind of stuff. And there isn't a routine around that. But there is more time for me and for the first time, I've been able to create time for me, you know, so that's kind of how I do it.

Joe 15:18

That's, absolutely amazing. You know, and I love how the impatience kicks in. This is taking too long like I won't do it on my own. That's amazing, though, that you actually took responsibility and you stepped up and did it. I just followed what was said because my significant other is my much better half. She was like, okay, so this is what you're gonna do.

Joe 15:36

And I was like, okay, you know, I'm not even gonna argue. So I listened. I'm gonna be like the perfect husband. Yes, honey. Sure, whatever you say. It did help too. I don't. I wasn't very functional, getting out of the hospital. And again, patience was forced upon me so I had to use a cane when I got out of the hospital. Now That cane was the bane of my existence. I hated it I didn't realize this until going to therapy, but like, I'm very vain.

Joe 16:07

I have a lot of vanities. And I didn't want to you know, I was like, I played college basketball I'm not gonna get a cane this is ridiculous. So I would do a quote out forget my cane at home, and we'd be out and you know, she was like well where's your cane? I was like, oh, damn I forgot it again. So I just never wanted to use it. And the one time because for the first few months, when I was at home, I had Joe sitters, I would never be left alone.

Joe 16:34

Lisa went, she would have a show. And I felt like a little kid. She'd be like, okay, so Melody's gonna come over, okay. And she's gonna and I'm like, okay, to be on the phone. I would always have to have someone because she was really afraid that something bad was gonna happen. She absolutely should have been because the one time the first time that she left me alone, I completely didn't listen she was like, use your cane If you need to get something to drink you need to use the

restroom, use your cane.

Refusing to use a walking aid

Joe 17:01

I was like, okay, promise, I didn't use it. As soon as she left threw the cane, I'm not going to use this thing. About 10 minutes later, I went to get something to drink out of the kitchen. And when I say I fell terribly, I fell so bad. I fell back. And I just remember being on the floor looking up at the ceiling thinking, how did I get to this point? Like, what happened?

Joe 17:24

But then I realized, wow, I do need this right now. It was one of those times where I realized hey, I have to accept that this is where I am right now. Or I'm just going to be stuck here forever. So I realized I need my cane right now. Now that I've accepted that what can I do to get rid of this damn cane because I hate it I started to recover a hell of a lot faster after that.

Bill 17:46

You should have got one of those pimped-up canes you know one of those that like some dude you know, dressed in a massive overcoat, you know that's purple or something would wear you know.

Joe 17:56

I you know what, you know what I needed. I needed one of the pimp's cane with a big hat with a feather sticking out of it. That would have been it you know, and maybe like platform shoes. That would have been the look.

Bill 18:06

Those guys just rock that cane you know you needed to get a different mindset about what your cane was doing. You should have had it as an accessory, not as a walking tool.

Joe 18:17

You know what that's a great way to reframe. I've reframed so many things. Now, I wish I would have reframed it back then because I would have gotten oh, yeah, you know, I had a major hemorrhagic stroke and it turned me into a pimp, that would have been such a great thing to do.

Bill 18:33

I like the fact that you had to fall over and probably nearly smash your head open again, to realize that this is the time for me to just relax and just rethink things and do things differently. I had a fall as well at home. When I was left alone, the kids were at school, my wife went to work and I was sitting on the couch I got up and I got up on my left leg instead of my right leg.

Bill 18:58

I got up I was on my feet and then I was on the ground and then I smashed my ribs on the armchair on the arm of the couch on the way down, you know, and I was off for about three or four days. And I didn't tell my wife because I probably would have gotten in trouble like you. And then and then that made me take a different approach and pay attention to my leg when it's on the ground.

Bill 19:23

So, to this day, in the morning, it's been now November 2014, was my surgery. So it's been a fair amount of time we're coming into six years. I look down, I make sure my foot is on the ground, especially before I get out of bed. I give it a couple of taps. And then once I know that it's there, I get up and walk off. Yeah, it kind of wakes up it gets a you know, it gets kind of going and then and then it's good to go for the majority of the day.

Joe 19:54

That's amazing. You know, like I had to do different things. I don't know if you had this when I got out of the hospital, I hit my head more than I hit my head in my life. Getting into cars I would slam my head. I wouldn't I don't know what happened. I just turned into like a bumbling fool. I never hit my head beforehand. But now that I have a head injury, a giant hole in my head, I'm hitting my head on everything. It was crazy.

Bill 20:20

Yeah, it's some kind of a magnetism thing. So I would find that when I'd go to the shopping center or the shopping mall, I would get knocked into by more people than ever in my life. We're talking about three weeks out of surgery, sorry, three months out of surgery, again, fresh scar, all that stuff. And then just people running into me all the time. And me trying to work out how I became magnetized to every single person who's not paying attention to where they're walking right now.

Joe 20:50

I'll tell you why. And you know, forgive my language for a second people are dicks. People don't pay attention to what's going on in front of them. Unfortunately, they have blinders. On it's all about, like what they're doing getting from point A to point B, not realizing there are other people around.

Bill 21:05

Yeah, absolutely. Look, it's been a really interesting experience that interact with other people in the way that we're chatting about it is something that I haven't contemplated much. And, yeah, it was really difficult to try to find myself in a place where I felt like I was safe and I kind of did the whole, you know, looking around the place, making sure that nobody was coming from out of nowhere to ball me over. Because I really can't think about like my head getting hit. It just really makes me cringe like thinking about it even.

Joe 21:42

If I think back about it, I probably should have had a helmet on, you know, I probably should have just been the boy in a bubble just to make sure I had people away from me. It was it was intense. Also, there was an incident at the hospital when I was there, which resulted in a gnarly case of PTSD. So like noises and certain things would set it off, especially in public. Then I'll have like these little freakouts which on top of everything else recovering from a brain injury with PTSD. Oh my gosh, recovery was a nightmare, you know, but you know, we were resilient. I honestly think that brain injury survivors are the most resilient people in the world.

Bill 22:18

Yeah. And you have to be because it's an ongoing recovery. It's not something that you do, and it's just over. This is what surprised me more than anything. And I've said on a few episodes, you know, you see somebody in a wheelchair. And I used to think the only difference between me and that person is they're not walking, man what a naive way to look at a person in a wheelchair. I mean, there's so much going on underneath that I had an idea, too. They could be having, you know, spasticity, they could be in pain they could be, you know, there's so many things and I just used to see him and go well, you know, the only thing they can't do differently is walk.

Joe 22:57

It's amazing what a brain injury and a stroke, how much perspective it gives you and how it changes you it changes you. You know what's funny, I wouldn't people ask me oh man, don't you wish like things were normal? And I'm like, no, this helps. I would not change a thing. It's helped me become the person that I think I always wanted to be. I'm like a better version of myself. I'm Joe 2.0.

Intro 23:21

If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time 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 recover? What things should I void in case I make matters worse, doctors will explain things, but, because you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask.

Intro 23:46

If this is you, you may miss 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 where you can download a guide that will help you. It's called seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke. 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, they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery. head to the website now, recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide. It's free.

Joe 24:33

The best version of myself that I've ever been. And I also think that we have a little bit of a cheat code because we know what it's like to come this close to not being here. So when I see when I think about the things I stressed out about prior when I see people get stuck on these just ridiculous things. I'm like, wow, why are you focused on them like, oh, I used to be that, you know, I think we know that that's we can save our mental bandwidth which isn't a whole lot. Most of the time, for the truly important things.

Bill 25:02

That's it. And from time to time, if you're like me, Joe, you might go back to an old pattern or two.

Joe 25:09

Yeah. Oh, for sure. It's it's hard. It's hard. So I've learned over so I'm going on

four years in August will be four years for me. And I still talk about like, Oh, yeah, all that stuff. It's over. I already did that. The neuro fatigue. I had no idea that that was going to be something I would be dealing with forever. I didn't know because I didn't have it for the first couple of months when I was home. Like it wasn't that bad. I would read something. I'd have to take a nap because like it was just exhausting.

Joe 25:40

But I was like, as soon as that was over, I was like, Oh, yeah, that wasn't too bad. But everybody warned me the neuro fatigue brain fog like that's, it's a thing. I was like, alright, cool. I didn't have an episode for it was something like seven or eight months. And in my head. I'm like, no big deal. I went through it and then after seven, eight months oh my goodness, it came back with a vengeance.

Joe 26:04

And I was taken aback. I was not expecting it. And then the more and more people that I spoke to this one woman, she had her stroke I think was around 13 years ago and she said, I went six and a half years with no brain fog with no neuro fatigue then she said, After six and a half years, it came back non stop for about two months. And she's like, it's just a weird ebb and flow, the way our brains connect, you know.

Neuro fatigue and thyroid



Bill 26:28

There are a lot of things going on with neuro fatigue. And what a lot of people

don't realize is a lot of it sometimes has to do with the thyroid gland, because I had a thyroid gland issue that the same time that I had the brain issue. So one of the situations I was trying to work out was whether the neuro fatigue was a result of my thyroid or was a result of the brain injury, and I was going through this process, right, and then eventually, after about two and a half years after my surgery, I had thyroid surgery, and then the neuro fatigue went through the roof and I realized that it was the thyroid that was making my neurological fatigue even worse.

Bill 27:04

So if you have a bad couple of months and your thyroid is under pressure or attack, it may not be the brain it may be another part of your body. And it's a complicated thing because people just put it all in the same place. It's neuro fatigue, I've had a stroke, they make the assumption. And the other thing that can cause neuro fatigue is adrenal gland issues. So some people might have overactive adrenal glands, then they crash and then the neuro fatigue kicks in.

Bill 27:33

And for some people, it's even actually eating shit foods like gluten, dairy, alcohol, that kind of stuff, because that creates a slowdown in the metabolism, and therefore the brain can't get the energy that it needs. And then it makes matters worse. So I've seen a lot of people who have improved their neuro fatigue and they've been able to become more able to do more as the day as the months progressed and the years progressed, and then they have their slumps.

Bill 28:00

And I'm a perfect example of that because I have some good days and good months, and then I have what I call now that amazing signal where my body says, dude, go and rest. Your brain is going to stop working in about three minutes and you're going to be talking gobbledygook just go and do nothing. And now I go and that's how I manage it. But my day, normally I start to Peter out if I've had a good night's sleep, I start to Peter out at about seven, eight hours on the go.

Joe 28:32

Okay, I get yelled at constantly that I don't sleep enough. And I know I'm going to say it and I'm going to get a look. I'll comfortably get maybe about five, or six hours of sleep. And so my bedtime normally will be about 2, 3 in the morning. And then like I never wake up later than like nine to walk my dog. And I got yelled at

for years by my occupational therapists I just, get yelled at by people around the world. Oh, Joe, what are you still doing up? I have this sickness now. I have this illness where I need to connect and help our community.

Joe 29:14

It's something that I honestly feel that it's one of the reasons that I made it back. I feel it's my purpose. I feel like it's my meaning. And there are people around the world. You know, and I'm talking to people in Macedonia, I'm talking to, you know, people in Singapore, I'm talking people in Australia, oh, I have a lot of people I speak to in Australia, two, three in the morning, like here, it's late over there. It's like bright early, you know, and it's just something that I have in me that I need to do, because I know what it's like to feel isolated and alone.

Joe 29:42

Even though I've had you know, my significant other who has been incredible through all this. I've had, you know, good friends, my family, and not really so much. But, you know, I've had people here every step of the way, but unless you've been through it, you don't know what it's like. It's the loneliest, most isolating people. In the world, and I never want anybody to feel that way. So I want to make sure that I connect with as many people as possible to help them along the way.

Bill 30:07

That's an awesome reason to exist. That's exactly why I'm doing what I'm doing. Like that's, I got motivated, being wheeled after surgery out of the hospital into rehabilitation, which I had to go, you know, through patient transport in an ambulance type thing. And that's when I had the idea to start the podcast.

Bill 30:29

And I could, and I thought, I'll tell people, how to get beyond all the shit that I've been through now that I've had this journey. That'll help people, man, you know, we'll be able to get people to move beyond where they are right now. I made a post about it just I spoke about one of my podcasts just a couple of episodes ago where I spoke about, how I never want anyone to experience what I experienced and to take as long to get to where I got to because they couldn't find us or they didn't know that there was a shorter path. Or something like that. So, like, I know what you mean. And I'm gonna reframe it for you if you're not well enough to do that. If you're not happy and well enough to do that, you're not going to be able to

do it with all of those people. So, you know, dial it down a little bit.

Joe 31:20

Yeah, yes, that's the perfect way to reframe it. It is like I have to make sure I'm good. So I can help the masses that is and I you're speaking my language, 100% I understand exactly what you're saying. You You hit that point earlier than myself. I went through maybe my first year of recovery, lonely, sad, and isolated because I didn't have anybody to talk to I didn't know that this amazing, beautiful community was out there because nobody shared it with me.

Joe 31:52

I didn't know what to do. The only other stroke survivor I met was a physical therapist and the person was comforting. Probably in their late 60s, which is, that's cool, but like we can't share a lot of experience life, like my current life experiences, you know, I suffered my stroke at 39. I'm 42 now, dudes clearly like, he's lived his life and not to be mean. It makes more sense that he had his stroke at his age, you know, I needed to talk to somebody who understood what I was going through.

Joe 32:26

It was randomly at a party. I was there and I was talking, I was sharing my story with everybody. And there was this girl and she's just staring at me intensely, like, almost uncomfortable eye contact, and I'm telling a story and I'm thinking in my head, I'm like, I'm here with my girlfriend. And afterward, she came up to me, she was like, I understand everything that you're saying. She's like, I suffered a major concussion. It was around the same time I did about maybe a few months before I did, and she's like, nobody understands.

Joe 32:56

We went to get coffee once and we just talked, we explained what it's like to live with this brain injury, what it's like to function what our new normal is. It felt amazing so selfishly, I was like, you know what, we need to do this more often. I was like, we should like schedule, like a coffee date, like once a week. And we should do this, like, maybe we should record it, again, to selfish individuals, not for anybody else strictly for ourselves.

Joe 33:23

And then we decided to release it. And it's like, yeah, like, let's do this thing. And

it just kind of grew from there. And just the fact that there are so many other people out there, like us, blows my mind. And exactly like you said, I don't want them to wait and struggle. I want to help them get to where we are now. Faster. It shouldn't be a year, it shouldn't be two years, and it should be immediately you should get the help and understanding you need as soon as you have your stroke.

Joe 33:49

I'm like trying to figure out a way to contact these people as soon as it happens, you know, and, I think if we keep doing what we're doing, we're I always say this sounds super grandiose. Like we're changing the world, you are. We're just one survivor at a time. Because you're, I say this a lot too individually, we can change lives, we can with the people that we connect with the people that we talked to, together as a group as a collective, we can change the world. And I truly believe that.

Bill 34:17

I agree. I got challenged by some people that I knew about, you know, what I'm doing and what I'm going to do. And while this happened to me, you know, and I got challenged in a way that was woo-woo kind of shit, you know, the universe and all that kind of stuff. And I'm like, how could this have possibly happened to me so that I could do what I'm doing now? Or What a load of crap like, no, this is random. It's not why it happened to me.

Bill 34:43

And then, just before I had the stroke the first bleed, just before I got to that stage, I had started to get my business to the point where it was doing well. We had a property maintenance business, and I secured one of my biggest contracts. First time in my seven or eight years of getting this business up and running, and a week before everything was signed, and the paperwork was done, I had this bleed.

Bill 35:11

And my client says, dude, you know, where are you at? You know, can we get this work done? And I'm like, No, I'm in hospital, but I have a bleeding brain. Like, I don't know what that means. I don't know if I'm gonna be able to do anything. So they canceled my work, and they gave it to somebody else, right? And I was so pissed off about that.

Bill 35:28

I was like, I've worked for seven years to get to this point. Now I'm here and I can't do it. Don't tell me there's a good underlying reason why that's a load of crap. So anyway, I can easily be challenged by these amazing people around me. And then it's eventually what kind of made me understand that you know, dudes, like the money and all that shit that you tried to do to get to that point, is what made you unwell and create the perfect storm to allow this bleed to happen to that point, right.

Bill 35:59

So that's not where you want to be, don't make it about the money, make it about something else. So then I started to reframe all of that and got to that point where I was able to see it as a blessing in disguise. And then one day, I got to the point where I looked back and I said, and I've pissed off a lot of people. By saying this, I said that stroke was the best thing that's ever happened to me. And before anyone listens, loses their mind stops following me, and starts sending us hate mail. In the context of expanding my wisdom, it is one of the best things that's ever happened to me and it might be for you if you allow enough time to pass.

Stroke is the best thing that ever happened



Joe 36:47

Yes, I agree with you wholeheartedly and it reminds me I don't have a lot of memories from the first couple of months after my stroke, but the one that I do vividly is my girlfriend bless her beautiful Incredible heart. Once I was a little bit I was awake and I was a little bit more cognizant of like where I was she said, she leaves in and she's like, you know, the stroke is a blessing.

Joe 37:11

And without missing a beat, I looked at her and straightened her eyes. And I said I don't think you know what the word means. Because I'm in bed. I can't walk. I have a giant hole in my head. I don't know what's going on in my body. I have no I can't I need help doing everything. This is not a blessing. It took me a little bit of time. But I realized she was right. And at this point, and at that, and maybe about it was about a year and a half, maybe two years later, I realized I was like you were 100% right.

Joe 37:41

This was a blessing. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. I wrote a blog. I think it was the first blog I ever wrote that was the stroke that saved my life. Because it did. It didn't take anything from me. It gave me my life because it helped me realize I've been in survival mode since I was like seven years old. You don't live when you're in survival mode you survive. Now, I have lived more life in the past almost four years than I have in the 39 years prior.

Joe 38:09

And this honestly, is the best. It was an absolute blessing. It's the best thing that ever happened to me and I would not change anything. Well, I might change a few things, but I wouldn't change anything because it got me here. And I'm happier than I've ever been. I'm not just surviving. I'm on the verge of thriving, you know, like, I'm truly living life every single day. And I'm doing my best to help everybody else as many people as I can along my way, because I think that's why we I honestly believe that's why we made it. We made it not to complain, be bitter and angry and upset, and get in the same patterns that we got in I truly believe that we made it to live to truly live and help people along the way.

Bill 38:50

Yeah, I hear you, man. And I just got off a coaching call with one of the people that I'm helping through some of the stuff that they're going through with their stroke recovery. She's not in that space yet. She's not able to say that yet. And it's challenging her. And she wants to get to that stage. But one of the things that she said today was even though she has deficits, and she's not as mobile as she would prefer to be she's healthier than she's ever been. She's healthy. And that's one of the weird things that people don't realize is that sometimes, you know, not for me anyway, the stroke made me healthier than ever because I stopped drinking, I stopped smoking. I stopped doing all the stupid things that I was doing.

Bill 39:33

And as a result, my health has improved. Even though every single day I have numbness, I have balance issues. I you know, bump into things, I have fatigue, even though I have all of those issues, I'm healthier than I've ever been. So that's a really good, underlying thing that I've been able to achieve as well. Because I never focused on my health before I thought I did but you know, the bullshit version of health. You know, the one way if you go to the gym and smoke, you're still healthy.

Joe 40:00

Yeah, that's, that's amazing. I'm, really happy that you've done that, you know, it's, I have fundamentally changed everything about my life, everything the way that I eat the way that I think the way that I function as a human being, I meditate every day where beforehand I didn't I couldn't do it. I honestly couldn't do it. I'm a recovering Catholic. So when I get alone in my thoughts, I go dark quickly.

Joe 40:29

So I don't know though like, I'm I the first thing in the morning I do every single day is I meditate and that's it with my girlfriend set my intentions for the day. And it's something that I've done almost every single day since I've been in the hospital. I eat healthy. I'm telling you. I ate so much garbage. One of my favorite things to eat pre-stroke was the McRib. That's not even food,. It's not even a real rib. It's shaped like ribs as they press it to look like it has bones, it's so weird It's not food.

Joe 40:59

And it's funny because, like the food that I eat now, it's actually, changed my taste buds. I used to drink soda. I would drink more soda than I drink water. And now I haven't I don't drink soda ever anymore. The one time I think I had a soda was maybe like two years ago and it tastes a little it's just chemicals like this are disgusting my taste buds change.

Joe 41:18

I have more energy. I'm much more functional. I'm a lot sharper than I was and I'm healthier. I'm down around 35 pounds because I was slowly killing myself. You know, I was depressed. So I realized I turned to food for happiness because I was miserable with myself. So I had a sugary drink. I had like, you know fatty foods because they made me feel good at that moment.

Joe 41:44

Yeah, emotional eating. I was like man, my day sucks. But like this Mcrib and soda, I feel great for these like five minutes but then like I felt lethargic afterwards. Like I couldn't function. I was honestly I was killing myself. So now I am a lot healthier than I've ever been. I hike every morning when I take my dog for a walk, you know, it's, it's, again, I'm living more life than I've ever lived in my life.

Bill 42:06

Yeah, man, it's such a great thing to come from a stroke. And I know a lot of people are not there. And a lot of people are experiencing a lot more difficulties as a result of their stroke, you know, vision problems, hearing problems, speech problems. That being said, you can still take a little bit of control back. And I think for me more than anything is that there are a lot of things in stroke, we can't control, but we can control what we consume.

Bill 42:29

And we can control how we start our day, how we think, and who we hang out with. And that gives power and that gives support and that gives healing and encouragement. And it gives all sorts of things. And despite the vision problems, the hearing problems, and the speech problems. If you can take a little bit of control back, you will feel like a different person. That's my experience is that your experience?

Joe 42:53

Absolutely 100%, what helped me is I never had boundaries before my stroke. I didn't know what they were so I just kind of like, again, I was I didn't know how to make myself happy. So I was a passenger and other people's lives, and I wanted to help other people because my life was terrible. So I'm like, I'm gonna help you. Now your life is good so my life is good, no, I'm still miserable.

Joe 43:16

So as soon as you're living your good life, it's on to the next person. And I'm just like vicariously living through people. And specifically family. I just kind of like let them get stuck in this toxic negative spiral. And I would just get caught in that. And it would make me miserable, but I would just be stuck there. I didn't know that I could just say no, I didn't know that I could walk away.

Joe 43:37

So one thing that I have done is I've distanced myself from toxic people. And that has been one of the biggest things in recovery for me. It's been amazing. It's sad. So I describe it like this. We have evolved, right? You and I, are now beautiful butterflies, flying high, enjoying life. Now. We used to have out the caterpillars, we used to crawl around in the dirt. We can't go back to crawling around in the dirt. So those caterpillars, they're gonna have to evolve and join us because we can't go back, you know, so my family unfortunately, they're still caterpillars crawling around in the dirt. And they're mad that I'm flying high and I've evolved into a butterfly. So I still have hope that they're gonna reach me and come one day, but I know one thing I can't go back to crawling in the dirt. I just can't do it.

Bill 44:25

Yeah, and you've got to lead by example. And sometimes that's difficult for other people to come on that ride. You do what's best for you if you go back to being that guy that you were before. Man, that's the guy that you were just before stroke. Like, that's a dangerous place to be. That is not a place you want to go back to whoever wants to go back to their life how it used to be before the stroke. No, no, that's not where you want to go.

Joe 44:51

Almost got you killed. It's hard. The last conversation I had with my little sister. I love her to death but oh my gosh. She would kill me. Is she just complaining and complaining and complaining and stuck just where she is? And I'm I was at a new place where I was reframing everything, turning negatives into positives, and focusing on my circle of control, if I can't control it, I can't worry about it. And I said something, and she yelled at me, you know, not everything is good.

Joe 45:24

And without missing a beat, I looked at her and I said, you know, that's true, things are terrible sometimes, but not everything is bad. And I choose to focus on the positive things in life, because I don't want to get stuck in this negative spiral, and that's when I pulled away and I needed to, like, let my family crawl around in the dirt until they're ready to evolve, because they're stunting my growth and it's really sad. But I again, circle of control, I can't control them. I can't, I can only control myself, and I still have hope that they're gonna figure it out. I hope so. But until then I can't slow down my progress. You know, I have too much to do with the second chance that I have. I don't want to waste any more time.

Appreciate the little things

Bill 46:06

Yeah, I know you mean, and with the, with what you're talking about. It's how gratitude is important. Like, there's a shift thing that's happened. It's a terrible time, we've experienced all of this loss, all of this, you know readjustment of our life we almost lost our life, all the things that were important to us, whatever. What's good about it, though, like, what's the one thing if there was anything good about all this terrible stuff? What's the one good thing that you can be grateful about? Well, you know, I'm grateful that I didn't knock my teeth out falling when I fell, like, that's cool.

Bill 46:37

You know? All right. That's it, just go run with that one. If you had knocked your teeth out well, that wouldn't have been good. That would have been like adding salt to the wound. Okay, cool. So if you play that, what's good about it game, or what could be good about it, if I let it be good, then you can evolve and it could turn into a mind that is looking for the good in every situation, even if it's a bad situation, even if it's a terrible time, a terrible experience.

Bill 47:08

And maybe you can't do it right away maybe you can only do that in two weeks when you've had some time to reflect and get over it and whatever. But that's how I did, my focus and how I sort of sharpened my mind. Because I could have focused on the fact that my dad had to drive me around, and he's a shit driver. I could have had to, I could have had to focus on the fact that I didn't remember who came to visit me and you know how to type in an email and, and all those things, you know, and it was like, there were too many bad things to focus on. So what's good about it is you know what I felt I didn't break my ribs or knock my teeth out. That's pretty good.

Joe 47:51

It's a great way to reframe and it's a great thing to focus on. So being a recovering Catholic, you know, half glass half full half full, half empty. So I used to think, okay, the glass is half empty and the other half is full of poison. I just had this negative way of thinking. So I had to retrain my brain my girlfriend again, she has been incredible anytime I would get frustrated or upset or angry she would it would drive me crazy she would say, okay, now does it feel better to feel angry

and upset? Or does it feel better to feel good?

Joe 48:24

I'm like, What? I would get angry. I would get really angry and then she would make me answer and I'm like, feels better to feel good. She's like, okay, so like, let's feel good. Like, I'm just being really angry. I'm gonna feel good. She's like, just smile, because like it's been proven if you smile, you're in a better mood. So I'm just there angry to smile. But it made sense. It put me in a better mood and it helped me reframe things.

Joe 48:52

It helped me change the way that I think and it helped me break the pattern and negativity that I've lived my entire life, you know, and I hope that people out there'll do the same thing. Now I'm not saying there's this thing called toxic positivity, but I'm just finding out about and I think I was toxic and positive back in the day. Because, I would just be positive because I was afraid of the negative as opposed to like, I'm just positive because like I'm in a good place.

Joe 49:15

That shook me when I thought about that. Am I genuinely positive? Or am I just afraid of the negative? So I think right now at this point in my life, I'm super positive. I'm happy to be here when you said that you're happy that you didn't fall and smash your teeth. How amazing is that? You know, and if we want to break it down just like bare bones, how amazing is it to wake up every single day and take a breath? How beautiful is it? The one thing I will always remember and it's the first day that I left the hospital on the ride home.

Joe 49:48

I looked out the window. I was like a dog like no a dog sticks his head out the window. I was like that. And I looked out the window and I saw the rustling leaves of a tree and I broke down in tears. Now I'm almost on the verge. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. It was so simple, but it meant everything to me. So no matter how dark things get how upset, I get how frustrating it is. I remember that and it takes me back to wow, look how far I've come. I'm here. I'm here. I'm functional. I'm walking, I'm talking. I remember a lot of things, but not everything. But I'm here and that's a big deal. And I want to stay in that zone. Because just like, it feels better to feel good, than feel bad, you know, and I want to feel good. I think that's why we made it back.

Bill 50:36

Yeah, I agree. I am. I like to tell people who I know, who I have conversations with, about feeling angry or sad or upset or emotional, like, dare to stay there for a little bit, just so that you can go through it. So just play. Just allow yourself to have those experiences so that when you're over and done with them when you've accepted that they're just a temporary thing, you can move to the next phase or when you move to the next phase, you'll know how good that phase is.

Bill 51:08

Because you've moved away from a phase that you have allowed yourself to observe. And if you don't want to observe it, by fully experiencing it, do it a little bit distant, like, become the third person, step out of yourself, and observe yourself being cranky. And just get curious about how you're doing cranky and why you're doing cranky. And then change that and allow yourself to just like the butterfly emerge from that cocoon of anger, or whatever you want to call it, and see what's on the other side and get curious about that. And when you're there, again, step out of yourself, and watch yourself, experience joy and having fun and appreciating that, and then you'll have this third perspective, like this different perspective of how you interact with yourself. And if you can do that, you're going to be able to heal from the shit that we all carry with us, which becomes so much more amplified after a stroke if we've never dealt with it.

Joe 52:12

It's brilliant that you're removing yourself and you're viewing yourself. That's a great thing to do. I forever. So again, going back to being a recovering Catholic, I was taught not to talk to people. You have a problem. shove it down. just shove it down. Pretend Oh, okay, that worked for 39 years. And then my right basal ganglia exploded. So I process things out. Now I'm able to talk things through and I respect my anger. I respect my frustration. I respect these thoughts that I have.

Joe 52:49

The trick is and the biggest thing for me in recovery is I don't get stuck there. And that's a trick I think for everybody. I tell everybody if they're mad if they're upset, you know, and I wasn't able to do this today, and I did it yesterday. Today, I can barely function and people get upset. And a lot of times, the first thing people will tell them is, oh, but don't be mad, you're here, you're alive. You made it and like, Yeah, that's great. But now we're disrespecting the feeling of anger and frustration. You have to respect all the feelings.

Joe 53:16

So I tell people, be angry, be upset, be pissed off, break something, throw something, and then get over it. Now, the trick is just not to stay there. My co-host, helped me tremendously when I was having a pity party because I was having trouble with my hand, just mad couldn't do it. And she calmly she's like, okay, she's like, have your pity party. She's like, be upset, being angry. And then tomorrow, I'm gonna call you I don't want to hear the shit anymore. And I was like, Oh, okay.

Joe 53:48

So I was upset and then I let it go. And then I'm like, I'm not perfect. It pops up again. But then you do. It's it's the rhythm and I'll say this, I'm better, more than I'm worse. You know, like, I handle it more often than I don't. And it looks, like we're all works in progress, we just have to want to be better. You have to respect our feelings. And we have to move on from you know, like, so be upset, be angry. But then leave it alone just don't get stuck there.

Joe 54:16

That's just don't get stuck there. And I know it like for me, it's scary because I grew up so negative, and in such like a dark place that it feels good to feel that so like when I'm around people who are like, man, everything is terrible. The world sucks. People are awful. And in the back of my mind, I'm like, yeah, everything sucks because it feels good. And that scares me. That's so quickly I can get sucked back into that. So I have to like to focus on okay, I can't be around this. I have to like, either mentally take myself somewhere else or I have to physically remove myself from this conversation because I can't revert. I just can't You know, I've worked too hard to get to this point to fall back.

Bill 54:57

Can I ask you? Does it feel good or is it just familiar?

Familiar VS Genuine happiness

Joe 55:02

Familiar? So here's the thing I thought about that I'm like am I that weird? Am I genuinely like really? Like, do I feel good inside for this? It's like an old girlfriend. Okay. You guys broke up for a reason. But if you've been struggling for a while, and you've been single for a while, and then you go back with a toxic girlfriend,

you're like, Oh, this feels so good.

Joe 55:26

No, it doesn't. It doesn't. Do you think it does? It's horrible. It's toxic. It's violence. It's miserable. But it's familiar. So that's, if you think it out. If you think not just for this moment if you think it all the way through. It's just familiarity. It's not happiness. It's not joy. It's not a good feeling. You know? And I think I've finally hit that point where I'm like, cool. I get it. I get it. My new normal. My new good feeling is feeling good.

Bill 55:58

Yeah. Awesome. And that way About what a gift to get from somebody to say, have your pity party go down their path for a little bit longer. And then let's not do that tomorrow.

Joe 56:09

Yeah, I would be lost without my co-host like Lauren has been such a huge help for me and me for her like we, we have bonded, and she has family, you know, and she's one of the few that can hit me up and say, hey, how are you doing? I'm fine. She's like, no, seriously, how are you doing? And I'm like, Oh, there's breakdown. And I'm like, Oh, yeah, you get it. She's inner circle. Like she gets it. You know, and I think all of us need that. And it's that type of community that I want to bring to the masses. You know, I want everybody to feel that because everybody deserves to feel that especially after what we've been through.

Bill 56:48

I agree man. Tell me about the Neuro Nerds podcast. So like, what is it about, and tell me about your co-host?

Joe 56:55

So the neuro nerds were put together out of necessity because I didn't I know that this community existed. I was lonely. I was sad. I met Lauren at a party. And she was talking about her concussion when we met for coffee. And it was the most beautiful feeling the best feeling I had had since my stroke. And halfway through our conversation, I looked at her and I said, Oh, wait, like you're a nerd. And she's like, Oh, yeah, you have no idea because she's, she's a dance teacher. She teaches professional pole dancing. She teaches she is incredible. She's bodyguard trained. She is a freak of nature. She is such a strange, beautiful person.

Joe 57:38

And you would never see her and be like, Oh, yeah, she writes fanfiction about Lord of the Rings. And she is she is the strangest, most unique individual I've ever met. So we decided just to start the podcast, so we had an excuse to meet once a week and connect. So when we really okay, we're like the neuro nerds because we had neuro injuries. And we're both nerds if not very, like really cool nerds. We're like the new rock stars, you know? And so we come at it from a very different angle, a lot of things I was looking at people talking about stroke, it's always negative. It was so negative.

Joe 58:19

Now, I'm not saying, let's talk about the positive side of stroke. I'm just thinking, we didn't make it back. Like, look, we can talk for days, how terrible things are the fatigue, the stress, the anger, the pain, you know, we can live that do we want to talk about that over and over and over again. So we come at recovery from a different angle. We come at it from a very happy fun. We live to enjoy life. So we want to end we want you guys to come with us on this journey of enjoyment and fun.

Joe 58:55

So we come at brain injury, recovery through everything nerd up. You know, we talk about our recovery through superheroes a lot. We're big fans of like, the MCU me in particular, like my guy is Dr. Strange because I remember there was a scene in the movie where he's because he had his hands torn up and I struggled with my hand I struggled writing. And there was a scene where he's writing his name over and over and over again, it's just chaos. I was watching, I just broke down in tears.

Joe 59:21

So we did an episode about like, what superhero fits our recovery, certain things like that, you know, and it's been a lot of fun. So the neuro nerds, we are I say it every episode, the nerd nerds, we're here to help. And we are genuinely here to help, you know. And it started as two selfish people just doing it for themselves to improve our recovery. And it's turned into we're now in over 40 countries, which I'm proud of, and I'm looking forward to continuing to grow the podcast.

Bill 59:49

It is nuts how many countries you get out to wherever I'm at about 50 countries.

Yeah, yes. some of them have had like one download.

Joe 59:58

Hey, that counts. Is that download in another country that counts? You know you right now your life goals like that's where 40 something and counting. So we're trying to catch up to you. That's such a beautiful thing like our message of, you know, post-stroke, thriving and recovery and the information that you're putting out. It's so valuable not just to where you're at, but to the entire world. That's such a beautiful thing.

Bill 1:00:26

Yeah. And how good is it like, I started selfishly as well was always going to be about me. And then quickly, I realized that it had nothing to do with me. It's all got to do with all the other people who are contacting me saying, Man, thanks for that episode. I needed to know that thank you for saying this. And thank you for interviewing that person. And it's like, Wow, so I tried to interview people and ask them, What happened to you? And then I talked about the after what happened after how did you know what are some of the issues you had to deal with, you know, how did you overcome them that type of stuff, and I didn't realize that everyone who's had stroke needs to have those conversations and here I thought I was the only one. So that made it impossible for me to stop doing it. I just don't know how I'm gonna ever stop.

Joe 1:01:10

You shouldn't so what's funny is that before the stroke, I was part of the anti-social network. I never really dealt with social media at all. I was so I'm extroverted when I'm out, but I'm an introvert, I would rather be at home you know, I just so happen to have this bubbly personality. So when I started, Felise she was like, you know, you should tell your story, and things you're doing with Lauren are great. And you start your blog and I'm like, yeah, I'm gonna do all this stuff and I'm I help the world. I'm gonna do all this stuff.

Joe 1:01:39

After about a week or two, the floodgates opened, people started reaching out to me, people started sharing their stories, people started every day, or people reaching out and I'm hearing this it was a flood of emotion. And two weeks into doing the neuro nerds and my blog and everything that I was doing. I was overwhelmed I couldn't do it anymore. The day I was going to give up, there was

a day where I was like, I can't do this anymore. I just can't. I just can't do it. Because I just physically and mentally cannot do this.

Joe 1:02:13

There was a woman who reached out to me, I won't say her name because she's like a very private person. Her husband, she said, Joe, I'm reaching out to you, because my husband similar age, and seeing your story, seeing your posts, hearing your podcasts, reading your stories, has given us hope. And I even now little shaky, I broke down. And I that night, the exact day I was done, I was gonna take everything down.

Joe 1:02:42

And I just because I couldn't do it. I slept and I woke up the next morning knowing that this was bigger than me. It's not about me. I'm not doing this just for me. I'm doing this for the people out there that need this. There are people out there that need to hear that. It's going to be Be Okay, there are people out there who need to know that I can do this, this person did it so I can do it too, who need to know that they're not alone. So I will always be in debt to that woman and her husband because she got me on this journey. And just like you, I don't know how I'm gonna stop this. And to be honest, I don't think I ever will.

Bill 1:03:17

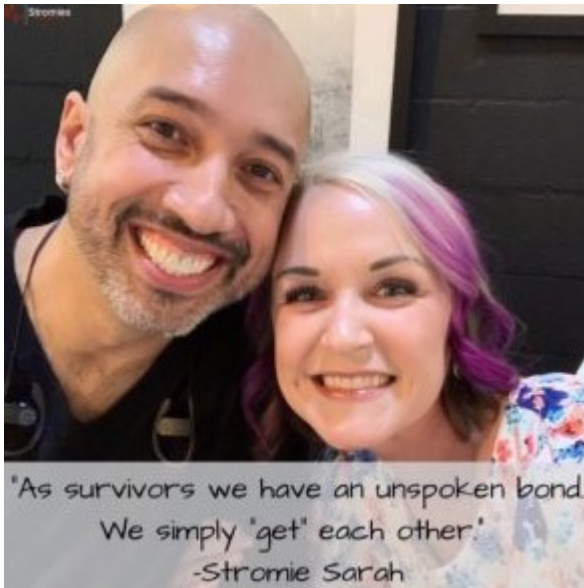
I felt unwell for an amount of time, especially after the thyroid surgery and all that kind of stuff. So I took a backseat, you know, but I stopped putting episodes Yeah, stop connecting to people and reaching out to people. And I felt like something was missing. And I felt like, man, something's not right. You know, I need to start doing something again. It occurred to me that it was the podcast. So I slowly found a way to get it over the line and keep doing it. And I used to sneak it into when I had a day off and sometimes I would, because I was doing a job at some point I was working for somebody else.

Bill 1:03:50

I would take a sick day, and I would stay home and do a podcast interview or whatever. I did everything that I could to just keep chipping away at it keep getting over the line, and keep getting that next episode out. So, you know, it's taken a heck of a lot of energy, but it's kind of like that passion project and that hobby that, you know, one day, the guy wakes up and says, You know what, I need to create a train set, and I need to put it in my garage. And then before he knows

that he's got 10 sheds in the yard, there's a train going through all of them. It's running people over. There are explosions. Like I'm at that point, you know, I'm at that point where it's going to next level next level next level, and I can't it's a monster. It's got out of control. And I love it.

The best kind of obsession



Joe 1:04:36

I'm so excited right now, like, seriously, you're speaking my language, but I love that I do. It turns into almost an obsession, not a negative obsession, you know, in a very positive way. Because what we're doing, it's bigger than us. It's bigger than you and I, you know, and I say it all the time. There's a friend of mine who just started a podcast and she was like, you know, there's not very many people are listening. And I was like, how do you know that? She's like, well, you know, my numbers are low and nobody's reaching out.

Joe 1:05:01

I was like, how many people do you know? Does that reach out to people? I'm that weird person that like I'm constantly reaching out, hey, I'm like trying to connect. I was like, but you know, when you go to a store and they give you either on the receipt, like oh, call and get like how it was the service? How many people call and say, Hey, I had amazing service, even if they've had incredible service? No, they just don't have it in them. So that's why we have to do this. We don't have to do it for people like us. We do it for the people who don't have it in them to reach out and say, hey, I needed to hear that, you know, and that's why I'll never stop always pushing like it's turned into this obsession.

Bill 1:05:39

Yeah, it's a beautiful obsession. I had somebody contact me from an almost like at the bottom end of the world, like compared to where you know, the US is and where New York is. And I had somebody contact me from New York and say, hey, I've had a stroke. And I'm wondering if you know any people in Manhattan who have had a stroke? I'm like, yeah, I do at least three people. What do you want me to yeah I want to put you in touch with them, you know, so I can connect with some people, no worries.

Bill 1:06:11

And then literally two days ago, somebody who was struggling with what they're going through in their stroke, who's in the UK, I was able to connect with them to another guy in the UK who is not a stroke survivor, but his dad passed away from a stroke, and it was on my podcast, and I was able to connect them to any man, like, that's just insane that we can do that. And I don't know who's had a stroke down the street in my neighborhood, let alone what the heck's going on in another part of the world, but that's the power of podcasts. That's what it is meant to do.

Joe 1:06:47

I feel that in my soul there in California, I'm from LA. So like, I don't have a lot of shrimps of items that I'm actually in contact with here. To be honest in Australia. So many many, so many people I've connected a couple of people in Australia. I've connected with several people in the UK and Singapore. As soon as you mentioned Manhattan. I was like, Oh yeah, I know several people in Manhattan. You and I do the same thing. It's like I feel like I'm a connector if I know where you are, who you are. I want to connect you with somebody else. Because I know what it feels like when I met my first stroke survivor in person. It was Bridget Shiavari. She's a photographer from Arizona. She's also batshit crazy.

Joe 1:07:30

I love her so much. When I met her in person, I met her family. We were online like we were chatting to all of you in your area. I'm so nervous. Like I was my housemate at the time. I came out and he was like, are you wearing cologne like I sprayed so much? It was like you know when you're nervous on your first date, and I was like, I put so much I know I'm nervous. Like I was just so nervous. But when I met her, she became instant family. And just like when I first met Lauren, I felt like I turned a corner in my recovery because there were other people like

me, you know, and I want that feeling for everybody.

Bill 1:08:09

Yeah, I agree with that instant family stuff, the connections that you can create in such a small amount of time are like never before. And like I feel that with you, and I feel that with most of the people who I interviewed, because they're kind of at that stage, too. They're seeking people who get them to understand them and all those types of things. And, it's never been better to experience a stroke as far as connectivity and learning and understanding and growth and not feeling isolated. It's never been better.

Bill 1:08:42

And I just, I'm blessed that it's happened in this time. It's allowed me also to be a little bit creative and express myself in ways that I was never able to do before and I never had an audience. And you know, what I love the most about isolation is that all these frickin Ellen DeGeneres and all these people who get paid \$70 million a year to some crazy amount to do all these amazing shows that they've got studios and artists and graphics and all this crap, they revert it to our method. They all came back to our method. Let's sit in front of a computer in our house. And let's record a podcast episode. Oh come on guys, you could do better than that.

Joe 1:09:27

It's a weird world we live in. You know, it is. And it's funny that this isolation has been it's been intense. It's been very strange and has been very intense. But it's also helped me look, our fire burns out every once in a while, you know, it's our job to reignite it. And I think it's been reignited because I'm here like, I'm kind of an introvert. I would rather be here if I had an opportunity. If I had a choice. I just wanna stay home.

Joe 1:09:53

But the fact that I don't have a choice, it's kind of like messing with my head. And then it just gets me thinking, oh, if I'm feeling this way, how about Is everybody else feeling? I have to I have, like, I have that need, I just have that thing. I have to reach out to these people, I have to connect with these people. I have to make sure that these people are okay. And connecting with other people. So like it's been this amazing, passionate thing that's reignited my flame for connecting our community.

Bill 1:10:20

Yeah, I agree with you. Isolation is tough. For some people. For me, it was just familiar. I didn't feel like there was much of a change in my life. It was just, you know, I've been here before I haven't been able to go out before I haven't been able to work before. So it was all kind of familiar and it didn't faze me too much. But then some people are at that stage where they're getting rehabilitation and therapy, and they're going out and about, and that stopped happening. And then that made it difficult because they were keen to do the rehab to do all that stuff.

Bill 1:10:50

So, you know, this episode is for them. It's for every single other person who's ever been impacted by stroke. If they want to download an episode and listen to it. Maybe you can they can get something from it and, and make them feel a little less. I don't know what freaked out. So, you know, I love that there is more than one podcast that is being run for the same kind of purpose. And how good is it that if somebody wants to listen to an episode of Neuro Nerds they can do it from anywhere in the world and it costs them nothing? That's even better. We can do this for them, and we don't have to take any money from them.

Joe 1:11:29

It's amazing. I love that I honestly do. Because I understand. that in recovery, a lot of stroke survivors, live on a very specific budget. You know, we can't just be shelling out cash to do these things. So this is a beautiful way to give back, you know, to the community. What's funny is my podcast. I'm a pretty energetic guy. I didn't realize my friend, Briney from Yorkshire. She said something about listening to podcasts. I was like, Oh, better than mine. She was like, No, absolutely not. Wait, what? What She's like Joe. You're too much. She's like I was trying to relax and rest your way to high energy. And I was like, Oh, yeah, I guess so I guess I am. Just a fair warning I'm a lot sometimes.

Bill 1:12:14

Feedback is Interesting, isn't it? I get feedback, I got feedback for one of my Instagram IGTV posts that I did recently. And I walk around, you know, I use my phone, I bring it to my face, and I walk around sometimes. And the feedback that I got was from a guy who said to me, dude, it felt like you were trying to climb into the camera. And I thought, well, thanks for the feedback. I appreciate it. It was the first time that I did a walking chat on Instagram. And, you know, whatever.

Bill 1:12:48

I'm sorry that it made you feel that way. Nobody else complained. But it's okay that you don't feel comfortable with that because he's a stroke survivor. And it must have been that perhaps the movement or something was overwhelming his senses and he couldn't deal with that. He felt the need to tell me and I thought, awesome. Thank you for telling me whatever.

Joe 1:13:08

People are cool. I love constructive criticism, I do. For the most part, it's mostly because we talk about a lot of nerdy things. And then like, I'll just say, Oh, well, actually, this movie in DC, it's like really like nerdy stuff that I get, like the most feedback from, but I think it's beautiful that people like, share how they feel about what we're doing. I think it's great, you know, and I only know how to be this. I mean, I'm a very energetic person, for the most part. I'm like, really, really positive. And I don't want to get stuck in that pity party. everything sucks mindset.

Joe 1:13:09

So I make sure that you know, I stay in this positive place and I hope that people vibe with that, you know, because, yeah, things suck. Sometimes they do. Oh, we can we can process that on our own. You No, but if we're gonna do this together as I feel like our podcasts like we're doing this like we're all in this together, I say all the time, I truly believe that we're not going to be in this together in a negative way. We're coming at this in a beautiful positive way. And we're going to get past this together we are.

Bill 1:14:13

Yeah. And you know, what I like is you know, your energy level staying there being energetic is for me when I'm in that way as well because I'm not that energetic, my podcasts a little bit more sort of mellow. Because that's the kind of person I am. But when I'm not energetic I notice my deficits more, I notice, my challenges on my left side more when I'm doing the other stuff that I'm enjoying when I'm having it out with Joe on the podcast, and we were getting excited, and we're talking loud, and I'm waving my hands, I don't notice all the stuff that's wrong with me, you know?

Bill 1:14:50

And that's kind of why I also like to stay in that space. And that's why, you know,

hopefully, people listening can understand why it's really important for everyone to be in the space that they want to be that's good for them. And, and some people vibrate at a higher energy than me.

Joe 1:15:06

I hope those people feel what we're putting out. Because if I'm excited if you're excited that energy, I want people to feel that this conversation that we're having when we're sharing the things that we're sharing, I want them to feel that I want them to feel like wow, I want to connect with a fellow survivor like that because I want that feeling. You know, that I desperately want that for everybody.

Bill 1:15:29

Yeah. And it's heartfelt so well, there's no better place to come from if you're coming from this place, being heartfelt well, we love the feedback and we love the fact that you can't listen right now. Even that's okay.

Joe 1:15:41

Oh, for sure, for sure. You know, especially like I love constructive feedback, not toxic feedback. I have a hashtag for 2020. It's 2020. Hashtag 2020. Don't be a dick. Like really because there are people out there who are just in this negative space and it takes less energy to be nice and do nothing than it takes to ruin somebody's day with words or actions, you know what I mean? So especially now in the current climate, let's just be kind, we can't lose our humanity. Like, let's just be kind of nice if there's something that you don't like about like, you know what you're doing what I'm doing? Cool, like, let's have an adult conversation, you know, and we'll like, come up, we'll figure it out together as a community as a people, but we can't just be mean gross, disgusting people. Like we just can't.

Bill 1:16:28

I hear you, man. That is a beautiful way to end the podcast episode. It has been an amazing pleasure to get to know you a little bit more and to learn about your podcast, The Neuro Nerds. If somebody wanted to find your podcast or connect with you online, where's the best place for them to go?

Joe 1:16:44

The best place to follow me is at Joe so rocks everywhere. You can also check out my blog at joesorocks.com. You can follow the neuro nerds at the neuro nerds everywhere on Facebook on Instagram. You can also check us out at the neuro

nerds.com. That's our website. And any you your favorite podcasts wherever you listen to podcasts we're there.

Bill 1:17:04

Awesome Joe

Joe 1:17:06

This has been awesome I appreciate you so much like really I am super vivid with you I love your mindset I love your energy and I'm looking forward to like, you know, conversing more and I would love to have you on the podcast we're working on.

Bill 1:17:19

Man, I look forward to doing that man. I appreciate the opportunity to share your podcast with your audience, that's the whole reason why I do this. It's to bring more people to more people. That's it. That's why we do it.

Joe 1:17:36

Keep doing what you're doing. Yeah, keep doing what you're doing, never let up because it's nice to know that there's another sick person out there that has the same illness. I do. passion and love for our community. So I appreciate everything that you do and we'll continue to do so sincerely, thank you so much. I appreciate this. This has been amazing it's been great getting to know you.

Intro 1:18:00

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