

How a Dog Bite Led to Bruce Young's Remarkable Stroke Recovery Journey

A dog bite caused Bruce Young's stroke. Learn how he turned this challenge into a story of resilience, recovery, and advocacy for stroke survivors.

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Transcript:



Bruce Young's Introduction and Initial Dog Bite Incident

Bill Gasiamis 0:00

Hello everyone, and welcome back to another episode of the Recovery After Stroke podcast. I am so grateful you're here before we dive into today's inspiring conversation, I want to take a moment to thank this amazing community. Your support means the world to me, and I'm thrilled to see how our podcast is connecting stroke survivors caregivers, and allies around the world. I also wanted to remind you about my book *The Unexpected Way That a Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened*.

Bill Gasiamis 0:35

It has been helping stroke survivors and caregivers find hope and practical guidance during challenging times. If you haven't grabbed your copy yet, you can find it on Amazon or at recoveryafterstroke.com/book. Now let's jump into today's episode. I'm excited to introduce Bruce Young, a stroke survivor with an incredible story. Bruce's stroke was caused by something you'd never expect, a dog bite.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05

Despite the unusual cause and the challenges he faced, Bruce has turned his experience into an opportunity to inspire others and advocate for stroke survivors across Canada. In this episode, we'll explore Bruce's journey his work in advocacy and how he's rebuilding his life with resilience and determination. So let's get started.

Bill Gasiamis 1:30

Bruce Young, welcome to the podcast.

Bruce Young 1:33

Thanks for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:35

Tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

Bruce Young 1:37

Well, it was the beginning, actually the beginning of the school year in 2017 and it

was Labor Day, Sunday. And I, in our family, had one of several dogs, and one of the sheepdog. He was a very old dog, 16 years old, and my wife and my son had said 'You know, gotta be careful, he might snap at you. And so what happened was, it was time for supper, and I went and reached under his head and said, It's time for supper, and he snapped at me. And interestingly enough, that's what ended up causing my stroke, because I have a big scratch on my nose.

Bruce Young 1:45

And it was about to start the school year, and I went to a doctor, and tried to get a doctor on Labor Day, Sunday. It's not an easy task. And so he just taped it back the skin, back in place, and then when I started the school year, I was just freaking out the whole time. I couldn't keep track of what I needed to do, and my GP was, in fact, he was suggesting, he actually gave me prescriptions so I didn't have to teach certain classes. And I was getting a major headache, and major headache around the back of my head, and I made it through.

Bruce Young 3:16

I managed to survive through most of September, and then October 21 I was walking around my bedroom, and my son said 'Dad, you're having a stroke, which I had no knowledge that was happening. And so the next thing I know, 911, and off I go to the hospital, and they put me in critical care. In critical care for neurology, and they didn't quite know at that point what had caused my stroke. And strangely enough, the emergency physician who was my neuro ophthalmologist, who was the one that treat treated me and got me up there.

Stroke Caused By Dog Bite

Bruce Young 4:03

And at that point, for the next couple of days, they didn't know what had caused the stroke, and then what they did is they sent a SAT sample of my blood over to The CDC. CDC is the branch of our medical system that goes and tests for COVID, etc. And they got the blood over there, and they figured out it what was causing this. The stroke was actually a canine bacteria. So I got a canine bacteria from my dog, and then when I was in the hospital, they did some searching in my heart, and they found a big lump of the cap bacteria in my heart.

Bruce Young 4:57

What had been happening, apparently, is the bacteria was being sprayed onto the

back of my brain, and so they figured it all out using MRIs, and they're all set to ship me off to the to do some in to do some heart surgery, open me up and clean out the part of my heart that had that in but few hours before that, the medical staff said 'Well, maybe you could try an antibiotic. So it was on an antibiotic for six week drip, and I didn't have to stay in. So I went home naturally during that time, of course, I couldn't be teaching so.

Bruce Young 5:41

So then I got through with bunch of MRIs, they were able to figure out that the bacteria had been killed, but I still, because of the the results of the stroke, I wasn't able to pull myself together to be able to teach. But believe it or not, I had nothing, no problems physically or below my neck. All of it was happening in the brain. So there are a lot of things that have stuck with me, which have prevented me from being able to do a full time job. So I had to go on leave.

Bruce Young 6:30

I was actually on medical leave from teaching for two years because I'd never taken any sick days off. So I had 383 days. So I was sick for two years, and then, because of my age, I was able to finish the sick days, and then I was able to go on to being retired.

Bill Gasiamis 6:59

That's quite the journey. So the stroke deficits that you have been left with, the cognitive ones. What are they? What are you not able to do that you used to do once upon a time?

Bruce Young 7:13

Well, not able to if there's a bunch of people in a room, for example, I have trouble focusing on one or two people have, I guess, what you would call brain fog all the time. And luckily, a friend of mine, who I met, he was able to be my driver, because of the stroke, I had lost 1/3 of my vision. So the neurologist said 'Nope, you can't drive anymore. So that took that piece out of my hands and I guess, you know, I get anxious very easily. So if I start to flip out on you, I'll just put a rubber mallet on my head and get me to stay in my seat.

Reflecting on the Stroke Anniversary and

Personal Responsibility

Bill Gasiamis 8:10

Okay, great. What happened in october 21 so you're coming into the anniversary of that. Do you reflect on the anniversary at all? Do you think that maybe you should have done things differently? Do you have any of those types of thoughts, or do you just accept that it was one of those crazy things that happened that wasn't really your fault or anybody's fault, and this is just something that you have to deal with. How do you compre? How do you deal with it? Or how do you work it out and hit?

Bruce Young 8:45

Well, it's interesting because my, as I had mentioned, my wife and my son had said to me 'Don't do that, dad, and I did. So I still hold it. I still hold myself responsible, which is very hard to accept, because through through my life, I've been looking back and realizing all the things that I didn't listen to other people's advice, and it's made things difficult in terms of whether it's my career or my family. So it's taken a lot of positives away from the way I can run my life.

Bill Gasiamis 9:25

Yeah, the dog, did it get startled? Or is it just because it was old and it just, do they get grumpy, what was it that the dog reacted to.

Bruce Young 9:43

Well, he didn't, you know, he was a, like we talk about humans being the old grumpy guy. So he was an old dog, and he didn't want to be bothered to go get his supper, because he didn't like to get up. He was pretty arthritic through etc, and so he was quite happy to just be lying down and not have to be getting up. And so he was taking offense to me wanting to him to do something.

Bill Gasiamis 10:17

Let's take a quick break here before we continue with Bruce Young's incredible story, I want to share a little bit about how you can support this podcast. Since day one, I've personally covered the costs of producing these episodes to ensure that stroke survivors, caregivers and their loved ones have access to resources and stroke stories that inspire and uplift. If this podcast has added value to your life, I'd love your support on Patreon.

Bill Gasiamis 10:47

By becoming a patreon at patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke, you'll help me continue creating this content while joining a community that's dedicated to stroke recovery and growth. And don't forget about my book *The Unexpected Way That A Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened*. It's available on Amazon and at recoveryafterstroke.com/book, offering practical steps and motivational stories for your recovery journey. Now, let's get back to Bruce Young and hear more about how he's using his experience to support the stroke survivor community. Was he just letting you know?

Living Separately and Coping with Stroke Deficits

Bruce Young 11:30

Yes, exactly. And with my other two dogs, he snapped at them, and I think they moved back a little more quickly so they didn't get a chance to to actually break the skin on their bodies, and they had a lot of fur anyway. But I think the long-term effect of all of this is that on January 2 of this year, my wife said 'You know, we're going to try an experiment, and I want you to go live somewhere else. And you know, when I hear you talking, for example, about your wife's birthday, and other people talking about, you know, like Thanksgiving.

Bruce Young 12:17

Here this weekend, I don't know how much you celebrate in Australia.

Bill Gasiamis 12:25

Not so much.

Bruce Young 12:26

You don't celebrate Thanksgiving.

Bill Gasiamis 12:28

No.

Bruce Young 12:30

No? Anyway, it's the whole thing with you get up the turkey, etc. So it's Thanksgiving, so it's a time to be thankful for all the things that all the things that you have, and it's because it's the first year of me having to be all on my own. It's really challenging because I don't have that Thanksgiving spirit.

Bill Gasiamis 13:02

Okay, now, when you mentioned going and living on your own, are you talking about a separation? Are you talking about, what are you talking about?

Bruce Young 13:13

Well, that's exactly it. We're not divorced at this point, but I think it's a nice situation for my wife, because she has the house, and it's worked out well, because I'm actually living in the condo that both that actually belongs to my wife and her sister, but it's a condo that my mother in law was living in, and She had broke her hip, and she and my wife and her sister did not think that it was going it would be a advantageous for her to go back and live in the condo. So she's now living in a care home, and I'm living in the condo.

Bill Gasiamis 13:59

Okay, so life's quite different to what it was in 2017.

Bruce Young 14:05

Yes, very much. So yeah and but one of the things after two years. Well, in 20 June, 2019, I had a a massive seizure, and I think you suffered that as well. Did you not?

Bill Gasiamis 14:29

I suffered something that may have been a seizure. I didn't have a massive seizure, a blackout, or anything like that, but I've had certain events that mimic that. Tell me about yours.

Bruce Young 14:39

Anyway, what I was on the phone with my wife. She was working, and we're just chatting for a few moments, and suddenly my phone went dead, and literally, I had just collapsed in the house, and she immediately called 911, back to the hospital, and was there for four days, and it turned out that I had had a massive seizure, and the only thing I remember the time in hospital was a whole bunch of very large raspberry I guess they're raspberries or strawberries, all on like wallpaper all around the bed the room of the hospital.

Bruce Young 15:27

So I was seeing things. And then after that, I came home, and the neurologist put me on an anti seizure medication, which I'm still on, and that's pretty well it for medication. But the as a result of me having the stroke and the seizure and

because of COVID, lot of the organizations like the March of Dimes. You ever heard of March of Dimes?

Bill Gasiamis 16:02

No.

Bruce Young 16:04

It's an organization that does provide services for people with disabilities, and one of them that they took on in a big way was people with stroke. And so we are having lots during that COVID time. We were having lots of, sorry, lose my words a little bit. Am I in the right position?

Bill Gasiamis 16:34

You're perfect.

Bruce Young 16:36

Okay, so in that so as a result of a lot of my Zoom calls, I met people from all across Canada, and they all had the same complaint that as soon as their time in the hospital was done, they basically were out the door and they said, essentially they said 'God love you, and in many cases, we're not given any future, any direction as to what they could do to further their rehabilitation.

Bruce Young 17:16

And when I heard the same story over and over again, I said 'Well, maybe it's about time stroke survivors had an organization that could speak on behalf of us, because like the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the March of Dimes, were large organizations whose function was to provide services, and they were providing services on their behalf, and not on behalf of stroke survivors.

Bruce Young 17:51

And so I formed an organization which goes right across Canada called stroke survivors advocacy group of Canada, and we now regularly meet over zoom, couple of times a month, and we've got involved in advocating for stroke survivors, because the rules for and the protocols for stroke survivor rehabilitation are available from the art and strokes Foundation created a whole book about what those recommendations should be, but the hospitals and the medical system are not required to implement those.

Advocacy Work and Personal Growth

Bruce Young 18:43

So what we've been doing recently, in right now is to connect with the Minister of Health for Canada and having chats with him and his staff about what protocols are there and and get those so that they are our rules as opposed to being recommendations. So working along with that, and still building on, on getting more and more people from across the country to work with us.

Bruce Young 19:20

It's challenging to get stroke survivors, because you can't walk into a hospital and ask 'Well, who are your stroke survivors? There's all the whole issue of confidentiality, which kind of puts kibosh on us being able to connect and identify the people who are stroke survivors.

Bruce Young 19:20

You're right. So you're fairly busy doing things. You're doing all these things, and you still have cognitive difficulties.

Bruce Young 19:56

Yes.

Bill Gasiamis 19:57

Is this work that you're doing helping you with those cognitive difficulties. Is it helping you to keep going? How does it support your recovery?

Bruce Young 20:09

Well, I would say it keeps me move moving forward. And because the people I'm working with are stroke survivors, I can't simply say 'Well, because of my stroke, I can't, I didn't remember to do this or that, because I get kick in the pants from other stroke survivors saying 'Well, you can't blame strokes or not. You're the things that you're forgetting to do because you're a stroke survivor, which I think is a good way to connect stroke survivors, certainly across Canada.

Bruce Young 20:47

That's one of the reasons why I wanted to connect with you, because I'm sure there are things that are going on in Australia and certainly in other countries around the world that can support what you're doing as well as supporting the things that we are doing in Canada.

Bill Gasiamis 21:05

There may be certain things I'm not really involved in that side of recovery. I've provided some of my time as a volunteer for the Stroke Foundation here, done a little bit of work like that, but I haven't really looked into the other things that go on around stroke. There's tons of people doing that, in fact, and that's okay. So, my whole thing is like bringing stories of stroke survivors into the public domain so that other stroke survivors finding them can feel less isolated and like somebody else knows what they're going through and understands the situation.

Bill Gasiamis 21:52

But yeah, and I think that this Stroke podcast that I'm doing here helps, perhaps encourage people from the stroke community to get up and do something about whatever's stopping them from accessing the type of care that they need or the type of care that other people needs. And it's good that you reached out, and it's good that you're doing that as well on your end, because I feel like part of what you're doing is providing me some kind of a purpose.

Bruce Young 22:29

I just met a lady 'Well, I met her online, through one of the stroke the stroke zoom calls, and she lives on the on Vancouver Island, and she was sharing with me, she had her stroke, and she has two daughters, 57 and 58 and they only live, you know, a few blocks from where she lives. But they no longer will talk to her, because they're saying to her 'Well, you, you didn't have a stroke. And just, you know, in terms of my own situation, I'm seeing that in spades with my wife basically saying you didn't have a stroke.

Bruce Young 23:13

You can't blame your stroke for what's going on with you. And so that's become part of my particular commitment to the organ to stroke survivors organization is to seek out people who are put in a position where, you know, because of something that happened to them, it should not be people, non stroke survivors, who are in a position where they can say and do whatever they wish and are not held accountable for their own behavior, which is very hurtful to people like yourself and me.

Personal Reflections From The Dog Bite And

Stroke Recovery

Bill Gasiamis 24:01

So, you don't look like a typical stroke survivor, according to them, and they can't comprehend how absolutely this incident has caused all of the changes in the way that you have experienced since the hospitalization and all the other things that you went through, there's kind of like a misunderstanding of what's happening to you.

Bruce Young 24:27

Yes.

Bill Gasiamis 24:29

How would you say your personality has changed? Has it changed? What do you notice about yourself that's different, other than the deficits, the fatigue, the the brain fog, etc.

Bruce Young 24:44

You know, I don't really notice any significant changes, because I find that, you know, through my years of teaching, I feel quite capable of teaching. If I were able, to overcome some of the issues in terms of anxiety, etc, that I face, if I were to walk into a classroom, which I know I can't do, and it's been pointed out to me by my wife several times, and by a psychologist I was doing some counseling with him, and I was, interestingly, he was a psychologist that set up a program for teachers to work with their anxiety as teachers.

Bruce Young 25:37

And when you went through the sessions with me, he said 'You know, I really can't help you, because you need to see somebody who specialized in narcissism. And so that's a big label that's been put on me, and you know, I'm certainly pursuing online things that I can do, counseling, etc, to try to deal with that aspect of me and learning that narcissism is not something that you can recover from, same way, in many ways, stroke is not something you can fully recover from.

Bill Gasiamis 26:23

I was gonna say, is narcissism a label they put on you now? Or is it a personality trait that you've had? Is it something that's emerged? What do you think about

that whole thing? Is there a difference between who you used to be and who you are? Or as perhaps the narcissism, if it was there, has that become more narcissistic?

Bruce Young 26:48

Well, that label was put on to me a number of years before I had my stroke, and I think it's been amplified, and it's given a really solid reason for my wife to say, take a hike. And it's unfortunate because now that I've taken on that label, I'm trying, attempting to do something about it, but I'm not in a family or personal position to really change what has happened in terms of my family relationship.

Bill Gasiamis 27:31

Okay, with the anxiety. Is the anxiety a new thing that you're experiencing since the stroke, or is it something that you had to deal with previously as well.

Bruce Young 27:41

No, I think it's been amplified. I was always the kind of person who worried about things. I was, always my mother telling me I was a worry wart. So it's been something that's been with me for a long time, but it is something that that certainly is more amplified and is sticking with me.

Bill Gasiamis 28:03

And how do you track it? How do you know that you're going into a space where anxiety is becoming an issue, and what does it manifest like, and how do you settle it down?

Bruce Young 28:19

Well, quite been taking a number of mindfulness classes, and so if I start finding that I'm getting over anxious, I will lie down and do a mindfulness session with myself. In fact, I was doing some of that before I joined you this afternoon to make sure I kept myself in order.

Bill Gasiamis 28:46

Yeah, you're doing a great job of, you know, delivering your message, having a conversation with me. Everything's fine and as a result of the things that you've learnt since the stroke, has it been a little bit insightful? Have you been able to kind of get a grasp on some of those long standing challenges that you've had your whole life, that you're dealing with now? Is it kind of giving you a little bit of hope that these things are manageable?

Bruce Young 29:22

Yeah, I think so I would say that because of the stroke, as I said, some of those things have been amplified, and I try very hard to keep them in check, but I just got a hold of a book, and I'm just going to slip away for a second here. Apparently this is a book that was that was written over 10, 15 years ago, and the title is 'Who Moved My Cheese. And I don't know if you've ever heard it was written by Dr. Spencer Johnson. I have heard it's really, you know, I could send, I'll send you a copy if you'd like.

Bill Gasiamis 30:16

Tell me about it.

Bruce Young 30:18

Anyway. It's very interesting because it's putting four creatures into a maze, and you've got two mice, and you've got two mini humans, and there's a cheese, there's cheese in the maze, and the four creatures find that lump of cheese. And then the cheese runs out. I guess we gotta go find some more cheese, and they head off somewhere, whereas the humans say 'Well, we better find out where the cheese all went. So they intellectualized the whole thing and make it and it talk.

Bruce Young 31:22

It's talking about change, and it's talking how humans don't adapt well change. So for me, I think it's a very useful book. And I found a few other other books as well, think there's this guy, Bill Gasiamis. I think he wrote a book that has been very, very useful for me to kind of get my act together and realize that, as you said little while ago, I've got a mission, and so do you.

Embracing Change and Future Goals After The Stroke Caused By Dog Bite

Bruce Young 31:56

That's why I'm so keen to work with you and work with other organizations, like the World Stroke Organization, etc, to have us create a concerted effort to provide the best services and care and recognition of people with stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 32:20

Thanks for the plug. I'm doing my best. So humans are creatures of habit, and change is something that does throw a spanner in the works. Would you have

been the type of person before stroke to avoid change as much as possible, and has the change that stroke caused thrust you into this space of having to deal with something that you previously could avoid dealing with.

Bruce Young 32:55

Absolutely like I taught in a high school for, I taught 25 years. My 36 years of teaching, I taught in the same high school for a number of years, for 20 for 25 years. And during that time, there are other people in the school district who would come to me and say, 'Well, why don't you consider doing this, or why don't you consider, you know, applying for this position in the district, and a lot of them were technology related, because at the time, I was the sort of the computer guru in the school, and I said 'No, I still have things to do In this school.

Bruce Young 33:41

And I think it was a primary example of me saying 'No, no, no, I don't want to change, I want to stay here. And what was happening around me is that there were techy people, young, techie student, teachers that were coming to the school and doing video production and doing lots of green screen and doing all kinds of interesting, innovative things. And then the final year, when I was, which I couldn't teach, I was being asked to teach a couple of courses that were technology based, but I was being asked to teach a grade 11 course.

Bruce Young 34:24

Which all the kids in the school had done the grade eight level of the course, and so they knew all this stuff, and it was a lot of programming, and I was left in a position where I couldn't teach this stuff. And on top of my on top of my stroke symptoms, I had this kind of stuff happening to me. And I think talking about this cheese, here it is.

Bruce Young 34:51

It's really giving me a kick in the pants to say 'You know, you set yourself up for the position you were in when you left teaching. And I think the stroke gave me a major kick in the pants to say 'Well, you know, I should have seen this thing happening. And the stroke, in some ways, gave me an excuse not to have to change.

Bill Gasiamis 35:19

Yeah, perhaps you're good at finding thing excuses and reasons not to have to

change anyway, if you're kind of that way habituated, if you're in a school for, you know, three decades, and you're teaching the same thing and you're avoiding that change, is it avoiding the change? Is it because of you're comfortable? It's a thing that caused anxiety, perhaps change or learning new things, or being out of your comfort zone? Why do you think that was?

Bruce Young 35:59

Well, there was a course that was introduced provincially, and it was called Planning 10. And I was put into that class when, when program started, and then 10 years later, the provincial government decided they were going to change the curriculum, and they were going to introduce a similar course at the grade 11 and 12 level. And most of the stuff in the grade 10 course, I found was at was perfect timing for kids to learn how to make a Resume, how to do interviews, and by the time they got to 11 or 12 in my school in particular.

Bruce Young 36:44

The kids were all working McDonald's and working at other places. So to introduce them to writing a resume or doing an interview, they'd already done it so, you know it, and it gave me justification to be able to say 'Well, that was a dumb thing for them to do. And so it again, gave me that opportunity to essentially say 'Well, I was right in the first place. Why'd you do that to me?

Bruce Young 37:13

Which, of course, comes back to we were talking about the fact that I got the bite in the nose. And I had been told by someone already watch yourself. So it's the whole thing has caused me to have a complete reflection of my life. And that's kind of where I am right now.

Bill Gasiamis 37:34

Yeah, it's interesting how stroke does that for a lot of people, it does make them reflect on decisions, behaviors, attitudes of the past, and they somehow, seem to get an understanding that having the same approach to life after stroke just won't work. Is that where you're at? Do you see that being problematic if you were to continue to take the same path that it's just not feasible to do that with what you're dealing with now.

Bruce Young 38:10

You know, nobody's really asked me that question, but you're absolutely right.

And so every time I talk to yourself or talk to other other stroke survivors or even family members, etc. You know, the same question is being posed by them to me and saying 'Well, maybe what you need to do is instead of having Bruce 1.0 is go to Bruce 2.0 we actually had one of the stroke survivors here. He made up a little story about going from, he's also stroke survivor going from 1.0 to 2.0 and the way he described it is you take a piece of paper and it's smooth and flat.

Bruce Young 39:08

And then you crunch it up, and then you try to smooth it all out again. And the smooth and trying to smooth it out becomes your 2.0 and you have to understand that you can never return to the 1.0 because there are things that you can't get all the wrinkles out of that piece of paper. And you know, each of these things has been an education for me to take a position that I need to do some things and I need to change in ways that I never thought I would have to.

Bill Gasiamis 39:46

That's a great analogy, that paper analogy, I love that because it's the same paper. It just has a whole, a whole bunch more texture on it.

Bruce Young 39:55

If you go, you know, I could send you the link, it's on YouTube, they've made the little bit. He's made a little video of it.

Bill Gasiamis 40:05

Yeah, send us the answer link, and then we'll put it on the show notes so everyone else can have a look at it, if they like. Yes, so it sounds like you're embracing change now.

Bruce Young 40:15

Yes, damn, and you know, talk to me, even when you come to visit my group in January this coming year, that you probably may notice some differences in me, and I'll probably notice them in you, and it'll be an opportunity for us to, you know, compare notes. And certainly you can have a lot of interaction and dialog with a lot of the stroke survivors that are in my group here.

Bill Gasiamis 40:48

Yeah, so the change that you're making now, what have you noticed that's different about you now that you're starting to embrace change? How have you grown from that experience?

Bruce Young 41:07

I find it challenging to answer something like that, because there are a lot of things that I didn't realize, that I still don't recognize, that are necessary for me to change in order to be able to find more cheese. And every time I get a hold of something that's been written about stroke, there's always something in it that sends me to pursue different things about myself that I didn't think I needed to be worried about changing. And I know you had an interview with, I can't remember the name of the doctor, but the one who did the brain HQ application.

Bill Gasiamis 41:59

Dr. Michael Merzenich?

Bruce Young 42:01

Yeah, and I've been religiously doing one of those exercises every night, because I did it when I first my son actually gave me that gave me the subscription to it. Two years after my stroke, after a while being my typical self, I said 'Well, now, now that I've got it, because I was going through the mall very quickly and and then I stopped the subscription, because I think I knew it all, and now I'm going back to it and realizing I didn't know it all.

Bruce Young 42:40

And, you know, taking on my conversations with you and the book that I'm reading, the books that I've been reading, and things that are getting me to reassess myself and my new situation is really challenging, and I didn't realize the extent of it until I was shown the door in January.

Bill Gasiamis 43:10

Yeah, what does the cheese represent to you? So I know that in the book, it talks about cheese, but what is it for you? I know it's not cheese exactly, but it represents something. What does it represent for you?

Bruce Young 43:28

It mean it for me, like the whole thing with cheese is your relationships and so forth. And I think of the cheese represents relationships for me. In other words, I may not be able to reconcile the situation with my wife, but I've connected with an awful lot of people, and I feel a real sense of warmth, particularly the woman I talked about, who's two daughters, have essentially turned their back on her.

Bruce Young 44:03

And it just gives me that as a result of what I've been put in, as in moving into another location, I think some of these things are realizing me that there's a broader scope and perspective on people who've had stroke, and I just want to get that message out to my wife and to anyone else I can who will listen.

Bill Gasiamis 44:38

Does the physical move that you made into a new location. Does that support your ability to change? Because that's a big change in itself, like you've gone to this new location, new environment, new different people around you, or less people around you are. There's a whole bunch of things that are different just because you've moved there. Does that support the change process?

Bruce Young 45:09

Absolutely. I think, through my 43 years of being married, that there are many situations I can relay where people that I was working with at school or in other organizations, I would be asked to go and participate in something, and my wife would say 'No, I'm too afraid of being in groups, so I we're not going to go. And that's something that happened time and time again, and I think with the separation now. I feel like I'm in a position to be able to search out those social connections that I wanted, and I've wanted for years, and that's ended up being a real benefit for me.

Bill Gasiamis 46:02

Seems like they're gonna add value to your life. Just wait till they pass, is that an alarm?

Bruce Young 46:16

There's fire station right near me.

Bill Gasiamis 46:19

Okay, so they're off to a job. Where were we? Tell me, what was I talking about?

Bruce Young 46:43

You were talking about how the move had as has required me to make other changes in my life, and I was indicating that some of the changes that I'm now able to do was things that I felt stifled to do when I was living in my house.

Final Thoughts and Advice for Stroke Survivors

Bill Gasiamis 47:06

Yeah, so you're going back and doing things that you never got a chance to do for many, many years, and now that's added a lot of value to your life.

Bruce Young 47:17

Yes, and believe it or not, something I've always wanted to do was to go on a on a boat cruise. And friend of mine who, who helps, who does the driving for me, when I need to go somewhere, I walk with a walking group, and the walking group is for singles, well, it's for people. Most of them are, you know, divorced, or they're all basically my age. I'm in my mid 60s, and they were, most of them are in their 70s.

Bruce Young 47:55

Most of these people, they've got a chunk of change in their back pocket, and they've been on cruises several times. And then six months ago, this friend of mine said 'You know, people have been asking if I would go on a cruise. So beginning of February, I'm going on a cruise for the first time in my life.

Bill Gasiamis 48:21

That's exciting, yeah, how long? How many days?

Bruce Young 48:27

It's 14 days it's a Caribbean cruise. So you start in Fort Lauderdale, and then you have two seven day cruises, one way goes, one cruise you go north, and the other cruise you go south. So we get to see a lot of the Caribbean by doing that.

Bill Gasiamis 48:50

And do those cruises stop at certain locations for you guys to get out and have a look around.

Bruce Young 48:58

Yes, they do, but have to watch my pennies, because all of these locations have their hand out.

Bill Gasiamis 49:08

Indeed. Yes, that's part of the honey trap guy, isn't it? Isn't it's the whole point of it is to extract from the tourists.

Bruce Young 49:18

Yeah, exactly.

Bill Gasiamis 49:21

Do you have to do any special kind of preparation to put yourself on a ship for seven for 14 days in that sort of situation as a stroke survivor?

Bruce Young 49:37

I've come to rely on my friend who drives me because he's the one I'm sharing a cabin with. So that makes it somewhat easier for me to deal with it, and but the only thing I gotta, I've made sure of, is my passport is good. Good for is good until December 2025 pardon me, keep forgetting what year it is.

Bill Gasiamis 50:13

So, you're going to be supported. You're going to have somebody with you the whole time that knows you.

Bruce Young 50:17

Yes.

Bill Gasiamis 50:17

Knows your situation. So you got, you got that kind of all sorted. So that person helps you with not forgetting to get back on the ship perhaps as well.

Bruce Young 50:29

Yeah, it's interesting. He's 10 years older than I am, and, you know, it's not like he remembers that everything all the time, but we're going with eight people from the walking club, and some of these people have done a lot of cruising, and they all generally, you know, they are familiar with the fact that I forget things and leave things around. So I think they'll be helpful as well. So I'm feeling quite confident that I'm going to be looked after.

Bill Gasiamis 51:07

Yeah, sounds like the community of people there to make sure that you're on the right ship at the right time.

Bruce Young 51:16

Yes, right.

Bill Gasiamis 51:19

So, what's the worst thing that can happen you get on the wrong ship and you end up in another country and just another adventure to get back.

Bruce Young 51:28

Exactly, yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 51:32

It's interesting to finally meet you and observe your story and hear it about the whole path, and I know we're only touching on little bits and pieces of people's stories every time we have a one hour interview, but it's very insightful to hear you talk about the things that you've become aware of and the things that you've implemented, the changes that you've made, the habits that you've broken, how you've done things that have been out of your depth before.

Bill Gasiamis 52:06

Even though you're quite capable, you have to be that quite a capable person to teach for the best part of four decades, and then to still have these little bits and pieces that you need to work on, just goes to show that everybody's a work in progress. Nobody works out anything yeah in their life, do they?

Bruce Young 52:30

Yeah, exactly. The stroke survivor group, the first zoom call, we had to meet everybody and decide we were going to do this. They're all sitting, in their zoom windows, and they said, and I said 'Well, we need somebody to be in charge. And they literally in the Zoom call, pointed at me. So I'm the president of the organization, so it's good for me, because I've had to look at variety different personalities, and to adapt to them and apply what they what their strengths are and do, and to put those into effect in a variety of situations.

Bruce Young 53:14

Whether they're some of them are very politically as suit, particularly the ones in Ontario. And then it's kind of forced me into that position as well, because the we introduced in, well, it 2022, I guess it was a new federal law, and it's called the Canada, Canada Disabilities Benefit. And the purpose of that law was to bring, it's actually the prime minister said it was going to bring people out of out of poverty, all people with disabilities are poverty, and the person who initiated that, Bill is my MP, and she lives in North Delta.

Bruce Young 54:16

She was born with a disability where she has, she does not have a full complement of rods and cones in her eyes, so she can't see as well as everybody else. And so, you know, and she was actually in a couple of Olympics, Disability Olympics a number of years ago, and I've had talks with her directly. I've also had talks with the the provincial the provincial representative. We're actually going into an election in two weeks, and I sat down with my local and my local MLA, they're called minister.

Bruce Young 55:06

What's that member of legislative assembly, and I sat with him for full hour. He gave me 100% of his attention when I start, I told him the story I told you, and he was quite surprised, and he said 'You know, I'm make sure I can help you. I can do things that are going to support stroke survivors in Canada, well, particularly in BC, because that's his jurisdiction.

Bill Gasiamis 55:39

That's good work Bruce, definitely good work there. I hope it gets you the results, and then it gets other people the results that you're hoping for, and I think it will. And all this type of stuff can only be positive as we get to the end of the interview. We wrapping up now, I'd love to ask you the three questions that I ask my guests, and the first one being was, What's the hardest thing about stroke for you?

Bruce Young 56:10

I think, based on my experience, it's having the people around me who are not prepared to accept the fact that I had a stroke, and what the ramifications are of a stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 56:33

That's definitely difficult, the misunderstanding.

Bruce Young 56:36

Yes.

Bill Gasiamis 56:38

And not being able to convince people would be very frustrating that would.

Bruce Young 56:48

Yes, yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 56:51

Yeah, I know most stroke survivors go through that. They go through that to a point where they can't iterate to somebody what it's like to have a stroke, and why, perhaps I'm not being lazy, why fatigue is a real issue, and why I can't make in complete sentences and all that kind of stuff.

Bruce Young 57:12

I actually work with UBC, they have a stroke behavior lab, and what they're doing is a lot of research, cognitive and physical research with stroke survivors, and I've done a lot of the research projects, and then I got on the bandwagon with them, and I wasn't going to let it lie so, but every second day, I'm sending them another person I know of who is a stroke survivor that can be there, another guinea pig for them.

Bruce Young 57:48

So I'm always, as you can see, I'm always looking for opportunities, things that I can do to, probably, in the long run, get people to acknowledge and recognize what I was saying before.

Bill Gasiamis 58:04

What is something that stroke has taught you?

Bruce Young 58:12

That you cannot change a lot of people's opinions, And that to try to do that in a head on direction, is not something that's going to work. And, you know, I'm thinking with the people that I've been working with is if I can do it as in somewhat of a roundabout way, or let people know that there is that difference between a stroke survivor and other people, and that they will, in some capacity, be able to acknowledge that there are differences.

Bruce Young 58:56

And that others need to at least acknowledge that. But they may not change their opinions about stroke survivors, but at least they, I would like to see my wife say 'Yes, you had a stroke, and yes, there are things that you have to live with, that I can't.

Bill Gasiamis 59:20

Yeah, there's all my guests have been stroke survivors, or people that help stroke survivors, or caregivers of stroke survivors, all the people listening, the same

group of people, what would you like to tell them?

Future Plans and Community Engagement

Bruce Young 59:40

Well, it's been every strokes, stroke support group I've been in, the comment is 'Never stop, never stop trying. And in my case, the never stop trying is meeting with you or other people around the world or talking to other people and realizing it's not just being able to get out of a wheelchair.

Bruce Young 1:00:06

It's being able to get other people out of their wheelchair to make stroke something that we need to realize, it is a lifelong experience, it's not something that's going to disappear. It's not something, as a neurologist say 'That's going two years from now. Well, you've done all you can do, that's it, off you go.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:37

It's a lifestyle.

Bruce Young 1:00:40

Yes, it is.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:43

Yeah, I appreciate you reaching out and contacting me. Thank you so much for sharing your story. Just before we go, there was one question I wanted to ask you about the bacteria that causes stroke. Do they know the name of it? Is there a name that you recall?

Bruce Young 1:01:01

No, but I could probably find out for you, if you'd like.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:05

Yeah, if it's possible, if it's a medical record about that and you know, it'd be just, I'm not sure, curious. I'm just curious to know what that is all about. That is such a bizarre way to have a stroke in that.

Bruce Young 1:01:21

Well, it is.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:23

I've met some people who have had strokes for many different reasons and every version you can possibly imagine, but the dog bite, that's definitely a first, I've never heard of that before.

Bruce Young 1:01:34

Well, my neurologist threw up his hands and says, that doesn't happen.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:39

Yeah, it's just fascinating and shocking at the same time, you know.

Bruce Young 1:01:46

Yes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:48

Hey, Bruce, thanks so much for being on the podcast.

Bruce Young 1:01:51

Well, you're most welcome.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:53

Well, that brings us to the end of this inspiring episode with Bruce Young from his unexpected stroke caused by a dog bite to his journey of recovery and advocacy. Bruce's story is a testament to resilience, adaptability and the power of community.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:11

If today's episode resonated with you, I'd love to hear from you. Please leave a comment, like and subscribe on YouTube, and if you're listening on Spotify or iTunes, a five star rating or review would mean the world to me, your feedback helps others discover the podcast and join our incredible community. Remember to check out my book 'The Unexpected Way That a Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened, on Amazon or at recoveryafterstroke.com/book.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:42

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Intro 1:02:59

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Intro 1:03:29

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Intro 1:03:53

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Intro 1:04:20

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