

# Caring For A Stroke Survivor - Jim Lanahan

Jim Lanahan is an entertainment producer who traveled the world until his mother had an Ischemic stroke in January 2017. Jim had since struggled to gain balance between his professional life, his well-being, and as a stroke carer.

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/IamJimLanahan](https://www.facebook.com/IamJimLanahan)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/iamjimlanahan/](https://www.instagram.com/iamjimlanahan/)

Highlights:

00:54 Introduction

03:48 Using humor to deal with Ischemic stroke.

11:18 It's not always about the survivor

20:00 Roll with the punches

27:38 Memory struggle

30:36 Dealing with life-changing situations

41:35 Reluctant to receive care from other people

47:15 Good things can come from tragedies

Transcript:

Bill 0:00

How did your identity shift? And was that traumatic for you? Or did you find strategies to be able to shift into that space of being? Son/carer and organizer of all these things?

Jim 0:16

Yeah, it took my life and turned it upside down. To be honest. I am a producer, I produce live entertainment. So a lot of my work has been traveling around the world all the time. Right before my mom's stroke the year leading up to that I had been around the world three times. Opening shows so the long and short of it is my mom had a stroke and everything just stopped.

Intro 0:45

This is recovery after stroke with Bill Gasiamis helping you go from where you are

to where you'd rather be.

## Introduction



Bill 0:54

Bill from [recoveryafterstroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com). This is Episode 93 and my guest today is Jim Lanahan. Jim's mom had an ischemic stroke three years ago. And it's not only impacted her life but Jim's life also. As her carer, Jim had to give up a lot and make sacrifices in his own life. And three years later, things are improving and some unexpected lessons have been learned.

Bill 1:18

Now just before we get started, I wanted to let you know that you can now download all the words of this episode as a PDF. It's perfect if you prefer to read and take notes or highlight different parts of the interview for future reference. It's a great way to learn and it helps retain new information to memory. Just go to [recoveryafterstroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com).

Bill 1:39

Click on the image of the episode you've just listened to. At the very beginning of the page, you will see a button that says Download transcript. Click the button, enter your email address and the PDF will begin downloading. Also, if you love the Recovery after Stroke podcast and you think it is helpful, please share it and tell others about the podcast.

Bill 1:59

So That they may benefit too. If you're watching on YouTube, please give us a

thumbs up and leave a comment. I'd love to hear from you and other stroke survivors. I always answer questions personally. Go to iTunes or your favorite podcast app and also leave a five-star review. Finally, if you think you would make a great guest and have an inspiring stroke recovery story to share with our community, please get in touch.

Bill 2:26

Just email me at [bill@recoveryafterstroke.com](mailto:bill@recoveryafterstroke.com) and I will make it happen. Also, please do follow me on Instagram. Just go to [instagram.com/recoveryafterstroke](https://www.instagram.com/recoveryafterstroke) and visit the Facebook page [@facebook.com/recoveryafterstroke](https://www.facebook.com/recoveryafterstroke). Now it's on with the show.

Bill 2:46

Jim, Lanahan Welcome to the podcast.

Intro 2:49

Hey, how's it going?

Bill 2:51

Going very well. Look at us social distancing you from California. me in Melbourne, Australia.

Jim 3:00

It's hilarious. Yeah. Well, we're safe we're more than six feet, right? So we're good.

Bill 3:06

I could sneeze, and it wouldn't make a difference to you at all.

Jim 3:10

That's hilarious. That's hilarious.

Bill 3:13

Thanks for being on the podcast, I came across your Instagram page, where I think you've got one of the funniest Instagram pages because you just talk about random stuff. And you just seem to do a brain download every once in a while. And you do it with such humor. But what got me was one time when you made a post about your mom, which was upsetting and made you emotional and you connected with me automatically. Can you tell me a little bit about what happened

to your mom?

## Using humor to deal with Ischemic stroke



Jim 3:48

Yeah, thanks for the lovely feedback on my page. And I have used humor actually to deal with a lot of my mom's issues. My mom had a massive stroke in January of 2017. She was living in upstate New York that's just north of New York City. And I was in another part of the country. And I rushed home to be with her. It was an ischemic stroke, and it was kind of right above her right ear.

Jim 4:20

So that part of the brain affected her emotional capacity. Her ability to talk, and swallow, she lost her left arm, and it's now paralyzed. She lost about 60% of her left leg. So she's worked hard in the past three years, particularly in the first two years, she hustled. She learned how to walk again. The swallows back. Talking his back, she never stops talking.

Jim 4:53

And, you know, the mental emotional stuff. It's a new version of my mom. It's like my mom. 2.0 but she's back enough where she can still get sassy with me and joke but she's a little more, nicer, a little less sharp, a little less, you know, tart tongue, if you will. But yeah, that's a long journey now. And she just celebrated three years back in January of this past year.

Bill 5:25

So, how old was your mum when the stroke happened? And what was she like

before that? What was her daily routine?

Jim 5:32

Yeah, my mom was 68 years old. And you know, strokes happen to people of all ages, but it's unusual when they're younger. And so everyone kept saying to my mom, you're too young to have had a stroke. You're only 68 which I've now learned is not entirely true, of course, but at the time, um, it was heartbreaking because to your point my mom's life was so active.

Jim 6:02

My mom was a retired registered nurse. She kind of ran the little town where I grew up. She still lived there. She ran the public library and was the chair of the board. She was the president of the women's auxiliary program in the town. She just opened a new library in the neighboring town and my mom was like a shit kicker. You know, she got it done. She was so smart, so driven, she was raising therapy dogs on the side.

Jim 6:35

In so many ways, she was very much my hero, to be honest, because she's such a good example of just a positive, hard-working citizen, you know, and after it changed everything, you know, within a year we had sold her house, we had to rehome her dogs. She was learning how to live basic life skills. Again, and she spent two weeks in acute rehab three months in subacute rehab.

Jim 7:08

Then she went to a nursing home continued outpatient rehab, moved in with me for three months, we moved across the country to Los Angeles. And now she lives in assisted living, where she gets therapeutic services inside and outside. But when you think about three years ago, my mom was kind of running this little town. And today, she, you know, woke up and couldn't put together full sentences. It's sad, of course, to see for me, but in terms of what's in her head, she'll just say to me, wow, I could never have seen my life turning out like this, you know?

Bill 7:48

Yeah, that's one of the biggest issues stroke survivors face they face that dramatic change, that instant change, and then their identity gets impacted where all the a sudden, for, you know, speaking for myself, all of a sudden, I went from being a dad who worked and had a business and did all these things and labeled myself in

all these ways to somebody who couldn't do all those things. And therefore, I'm wondering, what new labels Am I going to give myself?

Bill 8:22

And do they comply? Or do they fit into how I view myself and how I like to act or participate in the world? Initially, people struggle with that because they think that their job the roles that they have, or the labels that they give themselves, is how people relate to them. And it is true in a way they do relate to you like that, but there's no reason why you can't shift and change and have another way that people can relate to you.

Bill 8:59

You can still have fulfillment. But getting to that place is usually the hard part because people don't know how long it will take. They don't know what they'll be able to get back. They don't know how it's going to impact them financially and so on. So becomes a really big, dramatic thing. And I think if stroke survivors and carers alike are listening to this podcast and want to know what to do in the early days, just focus on solving the problems of the time.

Bill 9:30

What are the small problems that need to be solved daily when you look back at the end of the year, you're able to say, Well, I solved all these problems, look at the things that we've been able to achieve. I'm curious, when you speak to your mom about her recovery, how is she dealing with the changes that have occurred in her life? And how does she talk about herself now that her voice is back?

Jim 10:01

Yeah, I have to tell you doing the small steps one day at a time I say it to myself every day. It's such great advice, Bill. And it's, and the other thing I've had to learn is that what you just said is 100% true from your point of view as a survivor, but in a very equal and, reciprocal way. I need to remember that I need to change my expectations of her. And that was so hard for me because it felt like I had lost my mom.

Jim 10:36

And I think the post that you're reacting to was me outside of her facility just in tears, saying, Oh, my God, I miss my mom, you know, because this version, I often call her mom 2.0 it's not the same mom I had before. So what you just said is so

true. And I just wanted to echo that. Um, and I don't mean to make it about me, but I The caregiver, gosh, so much if it's about me, you know, and even though she's in assisted living, I'm navigating a medical thing today. And I probably spent two hours taking care of that. And, you know, so it's always about everybody, it's about the survivor and the network, you know.

## **It's not always about the stroke survivor**



Bill 11:18

Carers tend to, I'm going to generalize, but carers tend to make it all about the survivor. And that is a great thing. Imagine you've been going through a terrible time in your life, you're going through something really difficult and you've got a carer who makes it all about you, my gosh, what an amazing thing. However, the carer needs to stop every once in a while and go hang on a second, but I have needs as well.

Bill 11:50

Those needs should be met, if they can be, and if they can't be met all the time, every so often and the carer should be able to say you know what, I need time away from you. Not in a negative way. But I need time to myself I need time to do the things that I need to do. Unfortunately, what we've seen in Australia and I'm sure it's a similar issue worldwide is carers tend to very many situations become sicker and more unwell and pass away way before the person that they're caring for.

Bill 12:23

And that comes from this selflessness to just be around for the survivor and think that they need to put their lives on hold until this person gets better and they have a guilt association that comes along with that, that if they take some time for themselves, how could they possibly do that when this other person is doing it so much harder? Emotional distress is just as taxing as a physical issue.

Bill 12:56

And I remember being very conscious of the fact That my wife needed to be able to do her things, get her nails done, go out with her friends go on a night out with her friends and have some drinks, or do the things that made her recharge her batteries so she can feel like okay, now when it comes time to caring for me that she could still do that and didn't feel like she was missing out.

Bill 13:23

Now, I was lucky because I was consciously aware of a level where a lot of stroke survivors are not. So what I want to say to you is that Mom is the most important person to you, but Jim has to be equally as important or just a smidgen beneath Mom's needs.

Jim 13:49

It's Yeah, you're right. It was about two years after my mom's stroke before I picked my head up and said and permitted myself to say, God, this sucks. And this is hard, and it's not fair, and I have emotion about it. Because for the first two years, I just had blinders on. I just kept pushing through because she needed so much. And for the first year, we were living in different parts of the country, and it was so much logistical coordination.

Jim 14:24

But when we were both in the same place, and we were living together for a few months, I had that realization moment because it just came to a point right where I could not ignore it anymore. So what you said is true. And you asked me a question before and I talked about myself, but your question was, how is my mom acting now? And what does she think about this and you just touched on it again? And of course, you're so smart about these things.

Jim 14:54

But it's what you just said. My mom has the gift. of being a little removed from it. So it's the blessing of a stroke, right? Like, when my mom was going through the



worst of it, my mom was not aware of what was going on. And then she started to come back step by step. And I would see her pick up a little more, a little more, a little more. And as the caregiver, I would clue her in a little more. So major decisions I held off until about eight months after the stroke selling the house, because I didn't want to do that when my mom was not aware of, of the, you know, the weight of that decision.

Jim 15:40

I wanted her to be a part of it. Re-homing the dogs, stuff like that. So, still today, my mom has the gift of just being able to and sometimes I wonder if it isn't on purpose. She can just detach she kind of like has this thing she's got a left side neglect. She comes looks into space on the left, and just doesn't respond to me for about 30 seconds and it drives me crazy. But I know for her it's a survival technique. So even though it drives me crazy, I understand it and I don't usually make a fuss about it.

Bill 16:16

Yeah, I remember my wife trying to work out is this normal? Is he being more nasty because he's a nasty person now? Or what's going on? She was really confused about what was happening. And of course, every time I noticed something weird occurring on my left side or in my cognition or stopping a sentence in the middle of the sentence, she would always wonder Is this normal? Is this right? Is this whatever?

Bill 16:44

And although it's foreign, and it's something that you've never come across before, and you've never met anyone acting the way your mom acts now. It's all normal, in that the brain might switch off every so often and it might go blank. And it might take a while for the cogs to start turning again. And it's just something that takes time because it physically operates differently from what it did before the stroke.

Bill 17:14

And my wife, went through a couple of really difficult times with me because, at one point, I was on a medication that made me aggressive. And I remember yelling at her because she bought the wrong ice cream home. And it wasn't a cheeky kind of yelling or it's the wrong one or whatever. It was like the worst thing that you could have done. At the time, I had no idea what I was doing or

what I was saying. It took quite a while for me to reflect on that and go, Oh my god, I lost it over the wrong kind of ice cream.

Intro 17:55

If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time it can be, you're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind. Like, how long will it take to recover? Will I recover? What things should I avoid? 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 18:19

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](http://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](http://recoveryafterstroke.com), and download the guide, It's free.

Jim 19:09

Feel as passionately about ice cream Bill. So you know, and I've not had a stroke so.

Bill 19:15

You've never yelled at somebody because they got you the wrong flavor.

Jim 19:19

I mean, maybe I have I don't know. No, it's cuz sometimes I wonder like with my mom, is it a medication? Sometimes my mom doesn't get enough sleep. She'll react like that. If my mom has an unrelated sickness, a cold or, you know, my mom has some lady stuff that happens that will just make my mom. so mean. So I hear you, I hear you. And does your wife ever say anything to you about it like, Okay, I need you to simmer down or did you just kind of roll with it and let you reset?

# Stroke carers roll with the punches

Bill 19:59

Fortunately, she kind of just rolled with it and let me sit which would make it difficult for her to have to experience those emotions on her own. And it was really difficult for me later when I was more consciously aware of how I was impacting her to see her go through that and actually just take it on the chin, so to speak, and just put up with it. She was amazing, but at the same time, if I had been like that for such a long time, and she had to just take on that stress all the time from me, I don't think it would have been a great outcome.

Bill 20:38

I don't think that she would have been able to just go on the way that I was behaving for a longer period. So it's good that I came good. I would say I came good after I got off the medication which maybe lasted about, you know, three or four months however on your point about If I've had a bad day I've had a lack of sleep.

Bill 21:05

I am more fatigued which makes me cranky and need to get people around me to pull their weight when I say that, I don't need them doing more things for me for my tasks, but my children who were teenagers at the time and now who are coming into adulthood I need them just to do a little more so that there's less for me to do because I'm a bit of a martyr you know, I do this thing where Oh my god, everybody's left everything for me to do and for me to clean up and that drives me, you know, around the twist.

Bill 21:40

And they a kid and they just do the regular stuff that teenagers do, which is going to make something to wait don't put the plate away or little things like that set me off. And in the moment, I can't. At the moment, I can't stop myself from getting triggered. It is later when I notice and I have to get back and say, boys, I want to apologize for my behavior. Sorry for acting that way. It's not an excuse, but I was really tired and so on. That apology has made it a little bit easier for them.

Jim 22:18

Well, you know, fatigue aside from that personality trait, was that always there before the stroke, or is that all new since the stroke?

Bill 22:27

It was there always before the stroke, but it wasn't so dramatic and it wasn't. Or I would say, it was more often but not so dramatic. So I was kind of one of those cranky dads who you know, needed everything done perfectly by everyone all the time. I'm a bit of a perfectionist, the kind of work that I did meant that I noticed little issues and those issues meant that if I didn't fix those, I wouldn't get paid.

Bill 22:57

And what that did was that brought that behavior to my home life, which I hadn't realized. And then when stroke kicked in, it just amplified that behavior because I was dealing with fatigue, which is my biggest issue. I was trying to get less fatigue. And I was trying to have more energy for myself. But I thought I was lacking the energy for myself. And I was blaming other people for doing things that made me put my energy into cleaning up after themselves.

Jim 23:34

Yeah. You know, from my mom, in a very parallel way. For my mom, it's this feeling of always being overwhelmed. So, in our effort to get her back to as independent as she can be, I would give her simple tests. I'd say Mom tomorrow, call the dentist and make an appointment for this time on this day. I would make it very simple and my mom could handle One item on the to-do list every day.

Jim 24:02

But if I give her two, it's too much she has a breakdown and neither gets done. So I hear you. And it's funny because my mom, I recognize that trait in my mom from before. She was doing 50 things a day before, and never feeling like there was enough time in the day and never feeling like she had enough of herself to give enough energy and enough brain power, right?

Jim 24:29

And what that has kind of boiled down into post-stroke is this feeling of all the feelings are the same, but the ability is hindered. So she can do one thing, not 50. So it's funny how it's, I think it's about information processing, and it's got an emotion tied to it. And that's why everything you're saying rings very, very true. And I don't know where your stroke was or what type you had.

Jim 24:56

But I think that that's something I'm learning about a lot of people folks that have

had strokes is that the ability, it's the life skills like you can get back things that are so commonplace and they're just happening like you always did. But sometimes it's one specific part of a bigger life skill that just falls apart. And it's dominoes, you know that first domino falls, and then the rest of them are just a mess.

Bill 25:23

Yeah, my stroke was near the cerebellum. So near the center of the brain down low. And it was four centimeters in from the ear, which is about two inches like that, and it was a bleed. It was a blood vessel that burst and created a blood clot that was about the size of, I'd say, what you guys might call a dime or a 10-cent piece or something like that. And then it grew and it was about the size of a golf ball.

Bill 25:53

And because it was a blood clot, it was fluid and it moved. It would impact a different part of my brain every day. As a result, I would notice different things, and different things would be triggered. And someday some things will be better. And someday that would be worse. And you're right there was there was one little bit that I used to miss all the time. And that was remembering tasks.

Bill 26:20

And I used to have three or four appointments in outpatient rehab. I remember after I came home, and I would put them in my calendar, I would set reminders. And I would get the reminder, I would see the notification and I wouldn't attend the appointment. And Christine would say, why? why did you go to the plumber I said I don't know I didn't go because I forgot. She said didn't you get a reminder? I said I did. I read the reminder. Didn't that trigger you to go? Nah, didn't trigger me to go.

Jim 26:55

So funny. As a caregiver that drives me crazy. I'm sure Christine too because it's not, it's not so much that you forgot the appointment. I'm sorry, I live in a large city and you can hear sirens probably. It's not so much that you forgot the appointment. It's kind of again, it's like what we project onto the person we love. We want you to be perfect and not forget the appointment, you know so that I've stopped being sad when my mom does it. And I go right to angry every time I have to remind myself Take a deep breath, as you said earlier, Bill one day at a

time and we'll get there you know, but yeah, that happens a lot.

## **Memory struggle after stroke**

Bill 27:38

The other thing I'm struggling with still, and it's been 8 years in February, since the first episode, I struggle with some words and I get stuck with wear, wear, were, and where. I don't know which one to use when. And it's such a difficult thing and I'll be writing and I have to stop and I have to think about which where is this? Is it w.h.e.r.e? Which one is it? And it takes me a little while to get that right but their, they're, are there, makes no difference. So I'm good with that one.

Jim 28:15

Oh, yeah, that's funny. Their, they're, are there is harder for me anyway.

Bill 28:23

I know stroke survivors who couldn't find the radio tuning button on the radio in the car. They get in the car start the car every day, want to change the channel, and don't know where the button is.

Jim 28:40

And are you? Are you better off if you are left to your own devices to find the button or do you like it better when Christine helps you?

Bill 28:52

I prefer to just navigate my way through it and not be reminded or taught because then helps me create my pathways to getting to the solution. Whereas if somebody intervenes, then it kind of stops that pathway from getting strengthened. And Christine still does this. And I still do this from time to time. I get it, I start a sentence, and then I stop.

Bill 29:22

And then I start talking. And she says, before I start talking, she'll need to wrap that she'll say, oh come on, get on with it, finish up what you were saying. And by then, I may have forgotten. But by then I got cranky because she interrupted me. After all, she had a pause. And a pause normally means that she could stop talking, but not in my case. In my case, it means just waiting and listening. There's more.

Jim 29:51

Parallel lives. My mom and I do it all the time. Or I ask her a question, and she pauses and doesn't answer it. And I'm like, Okay. Why are you being quiet? And she's like, I'm thinking, but I have to remember my mom can think for a few seconds. And then there's the pause. So it could be like seven or eight seconds, which feels like an eternity, right?

Jim 30:13

But my mom's a little different in that she wants me to find that radio button for her. And it might be because she's 73 now. But yeah, she likes me to do things for her. About these sirens Bill. I have to tell you, I moved into this building three weeks ago. I've never heard a siren of course the one day we record something, sirens.

## Dealing with life-changing situations



Bill 30:36

It's just what happens on podcasts, audio fails when you're about to record, and all these things happen. It's normal. So how about you though? How did your identity shift because you're working, you're doing all these things, and you have a relationship with your mom, which is normal for the majority of your life? You've always known your mom the way that she is. How does your identity shift? And was that traumatic for you? Or did you find strategies to be able to shift into that space of being a son/carer and organizer of all these things?

Jim 31:17

Yeah, it took my life and turned it upside down. To be honest. I am a producer, I produce live entertainment. So a lot of my work has me traveling around the world all the time. Right before my mom's stroke the year leading up to that I had been around the world three times. Opening shows. So the long and short of it is

my mom had a stroke and everything just stopped. And I kept my old job for about a year.

Jim 31:50

And I kept things going, I was successful. Everybody kept saying I don't know how you're doing it. But I also did it to my detriment. I gained probably about 45 pounds in a year and a half. I was eating in my car, I was living on airplanes. I didn't cook myself a meal for two years. You know, before that I had run in 2016. I ran seven half marathons and used to love running. That all stopped. I ran a five-k last year. And that's the race I've done in three years.

Jim 32:29

So to your point, and I hear you loud and clear about caregivers needing to make themselves that important. I just stopped doing that. I just had to focus on my job, which has always been a lot of responsibility, and then her, and then I wound up leaving that job that I had and I was unemployed for about two months and then I moved to Los Angeles for a job where I am now so holy cannoli life is Different.

Jim 33:01

But what I have been proud of is baby steps back to normal. So in a year, my mom had this life-altering brain event, and me switching jobs and both of us, oh, and you know, selling my childhood house and rehoming dogs, a lot of emotional stuff. Then I moved across the country all in a year. When I got here to California, I just said to myself, kid, you got to stop and breathe.

Jim 33:33

And you have to get back to yourself. And I wasn't so good at that right away. It's taken me some time. But um, I am back to it more and more. And work has been busy again, and I've been able to kind of find a balance. Having my mom in assisted living has helped me. That's been important. And I'm slowly making the mind shift back to Jim, you have to make yourself a priority. Everyone at work will still be there tomorrow. Your mom will be there tomorrow. What's going on with you now? You know, I've had to make that shift and that is a conscious effort every day to remind myself to do it. So it's been tough but I'm getting there slowly.

Bill 34:22

Yeah, well done now, just when everything was going back to normal and you



settled into California, your jobs going great. Mom's being sorted. She's getting better. Now, we're dealing with this new worldwide pandemic of coronavirus. And your mom's needs don't change. She still needs to go to her appointments in the hospitals and all those things need to happen. How has that affected you now? How has that changed your thinking how do you have to help out your mom and what's changed there?

Jim 35:01

Well, there's a silver lining there in as much as where she lives has been locked down in this country, the first outbreak was in a nursing home in Washington State. And I believe, I don't know the exact numbers, but all but like 10 of the residents got COVID-19 and there have been 30-odd deaths. So when that happened, every assisted living nursing home kind of just tied into the policies. I've not been able to go in and see my mom now for about three weeks.

Jim 35:42

And a lot of people are annoyed by that. I love it. If that's gonna keep those old people alive. Then lock all the doors, close the windows, keep them alive, you know, as we know, COVID tends to kill people over 70 most but a lot of people are complaining, they do cute things. They do things like I visited my mom through a bay window. And we talked on FaceTime so I could hear her and see her in person.

Jim 36:10

And I told her that seeing her through the glass like that was like she had gone to Lady prison. And she thought that was funny. But, uh, you know, so how has it changed things? Today? My mom needs to this is a lot but I know you can handle it. She has to get a urine sample. So I can't do it for her. I'd normally I would make arrangements to go up after work and help her do the thing. I would drop it off at the lab, you know, but today, I just called the nurse at the facility and I said this is what's going on. This is where the specimen cup is.

Jim 36:50

She said don't worry about a thing. What do you need me to do? I'll do it for you. So locked down has kind of weirdly made my life a little simpler. Doctors do not see Patients unless it is medically important, if my mom had another brain event or something she'd go right to the ER, but my mom had a fall the night before her last minor fall. They didn't know if she bumped her head or not. She had a little

bit of a skin tear on her hand.

Jim 37:17

I said put the bandaid on Has she stopped bleeding because she's on Plavix. Has she stopped bleeding? Yes, she is great. I said other bumps on her head. No. Does she say she has a headache? No. Mom, what do you want to do? I don't want to go to the hospital. No. I said great. We're not going to the hospital because in my mind, hard decision, but in my mind, the risk is almost greater right now of going to the hospital with all those people in there have coronavirus, so we made a decision not to go.

Jim 37:49

So it's changing the decision-making process and it's changing the decision strategy and it's changing our schedule of appointments. But physically, I have found it less demanding because I can do it all from my house. I don't, I'm not my mom lives about 45 minutes away. So if I go up twice a week, that's a lot. Plus once I'm there, it's never just an in and out right, it always turns into a thing. So it's been a little more streamlined.

Jim 38:22

And, and one of the silver linings of this is as a caregiver who's trying to grab back parts for my sanity time. You know, what I'm learning is, you know what, it's okay to let people help you. I used to try to do it all myself. And in this case, with my mom, it might be a little more expensive, it's already very expensive, might be a little more expensive.

Jim 38:49

Sometimes your sanity your time and your health are worth it. So if I can get out for a 5k run three times this week. Instead of driving to see my mom, that's worth it. I'll pay the extra 500 bucks a month, you know. So, yeah coronavirus has made things different, a little more difficult but I'm trying to find the silver lining inside of it.

Bill 39:16

Yeah, that's what people don't realize who are impacting the health system by not locking down and by not keeping their distance. I mean, that's the only defense we have against coronavirus at the moment is to keep our distance. People don't realize that the more people that present a Coronavirus case in hospitals, the

fewer people that can be there for cancer, stroke, heart attack, and the plethora of other issues that people face every single day.

Bill 39:47

And those things don't stop. People are going to continue having strokes, heart attacks, and cancer episodes. And we need to be able to help people get to bed, get a bed in a hospital. Under normal circumstances, let alone coronavirus. And I'm just saying that what we need to do is we need to socially isolate, we need to be responsible. And it's the most caring thing that you can do for somebody is stay at home.

Bill 40:15

It's never been asked of you before. And once in your lifetime, you're being asked to stay at home and understand the economic impacts and all the consequences that are going to come. If we're around. We can solve that problem later if we're not around because somebody had a stroke and they've passed away because they haven't been able to get care, or they contracted Coronavirus and they died.

Bill 40:40

There's no problem to solve. They're not around anymore. There's no point in that and our loved ones need to be able to be cared for while they're on their ongoing journey from recovery from all these other issues. So I think you're doing a great job. She's so lucky to have you and now that you're getting to that point where you're starting to realize that you're also an important part of this relationship of stroke recovery.

Bill 41:12

Hopefully What that means is that you can take better care of yourself so that you're a better version of yourself so that you can be around longer to care for your mum, but also you can be around to enjoy your life and the things that give you pleasure. That's important because as a carer, carers should not give up their entire life as soon as somebody becomes unwell.

## **Reluctance to receive care from other people**

Bill 41:35

And in Australia, we have this thing called Respite I'm not sure what kind of services are available around the world. But those things are available to a lot of

carers where the person they're caring for can be looked after. In another facility outside of where they normally get looked after to give that person some respite for a couple of days or a week or something like that, and people are reluctant to do it.

Bill 42:03

Because usually, the person surviving from whatever it is that they've been through, is a little bit stubborn or embarrassed to be washed by a stranger, or something like that. And I can understand that. But if you're a stroke survivor, listen to this and you need help. You can't rely on just one person to support you and make it all about yourself.

Bill 42:28

If you're a stroke survivor, it's not just about you, and I know it's about you. But it's not just about you. It's about that other person as well. And you need to give them a break. And you need to get used to somebody else, supporting you in the washing of your body and those things that are embarrassing, because unfortunately, if that person that's loving you and caring for you, is not well enough to do that anymore, or they pass away early because they had one of their issues. Then you're going to be stuck with a carer anyway.

Jim 43:02

That's right. Yeah and you know, it's so funny. It was like the fourth month when I saw my mom's boobs. And I was like oh today It happened today I saw my mom's boobs, you know, but to your point, it was almost harder for her because I'm her kid. So my mom's a nurse, she doesn't have a problem with nudity or caregiving in general.

Jim 43:29

But the fact that it was me was hard for her, you know, and she'd almost rather have a stranger than me. And it's funny, it's funny, and I never cared. I mean, I, you know, I don't have a gender issue in terms of caregiving at all, even if it wasn't my mom, I wouldn't care guys, girls, but um, so I was like, oh, they're just boobs.

Jim 43:53

But my friends make fun of me, of course, a little bit about it. So yeah, I hear you. It's an adjustment on Both sides, I think for sure, but once you get over it once my

mom and I could talk about everything from like lady issues to, you know, she's got a rash under her left boob. She's got whatever, you know that that conversation at dinner with that old man was uncomfortable like all the things were on the table and I think it helped make us a little closer ultimately, once you get comfortable with it, it's okay. You know,

Bill 44:29

It sounds like it's an enhancement to the relationship and you've seen your mom's boobs before anyway when you're a baby.

Jim 44:38

That's hilarious. Yeah, I saw them up close when I was a baby, so it's hilarious.

Bill 44:48

Why is it that we make it all weird later on? It's just so bizarre. I get it. I understand. I'm from a Greek background and all those things are said good or bad and That kind of stuff and I get it and most people are like that. However, I'm not sure I'm not sure that we need to hold on to those types of things to make our life even harder to navigate when we're in real need, you know, we need to let go.

Jim 45:17

And let me tell you something Bill, you're hitting on something that you don't even know about me. But my relationship with my mom has been so enhanced in terms of openness. So you know, I am from upstate New York, or a conservative little town, and the minute I turned 18, I started going down to New York City as much as I could. I fell in love with Broadway shows. I figured out that I wanted to date men, and I started living more authentically in New York City.

Jim 45:51

I would come back up where my very conservative father, my father voted for the orange president, and my mother's not conservative. But still, it's my mom. So I, there were a lot of parts to my life, especially in my 20s when I moved to New York after college, I did not tell my mom, any of it, you know, and then the 30s happened. I would tell her a little bit here and there, but she would stop asking me questions about my life because I was only giving her little tidbits.

Jim 46:25

Anyway, all this to say, since the stroke, there is nothing we don't talk about because boundaries only impede my ability to help her. And she understands that

and she certainly has no secrets. I cleaned out her entire house while she was in rehab, and all the things I found, you know, but I would bring them in and I would say, with no judgment, no emotion, here's something I found.

Jim 46:53

I don't know what you want me to do with this garbage or keep it or whatever and so, yeah, it's been a real breath of fresh air. Everything's on the table now. And it's okay. You know, and there's no judgment. There's no like, secrets or anything. It's been a real gift. You know?

## **Good things can come from tragedies**



Bill 47:15

Isn't it strange that from this tragic stroke and this drama and this issue in this massive problem comes this opportunity for personal growth? And both from you and your mom. This is the thing that people don't realize about chronic illness or any kind of illness it is a massive opportunity for growth and if you look for the opportunities to pay attention to where you have grown, and if you look for the opportunities to grow, you come out of it feeling like a much better version of yourself, even though that self might not be able to move that hand or put that leg on the ground or require help or something.

Bill 48:00

And that's what I got out of it with my wife, I've become a better version of myself. And I've focused on not being cranky, the way that I was before and so anal and so difficult with my children. And then when I did do that I was still okay

with it. I was still able to say to myself, you know what, you're trying hard. You've done a lot of amazing things. You've put a lot of things in place, you've stopped being the old version of yourself and every once in a while, you can revert to some old behaviors when you're feeling unresourced.

Bill 48:36

And you don't know another way. Because you're good enough to go back to the people that you were rude to, or aggressive to. And you apologized, and you never used to apologize. I had these conversations with myself and that makes me feel so much better because I did so early on. I did do the thing. Like if I kicked the bucket because of this thing, what are my family gonna think of me? And guess what everyone outside of the family would have thought I was amazing in a way that my funeral would have been full and all this stuff would have happened.

Bill 49:15

My kids would have said, Yeah, he was a good dad he provided but geez he was angry all the time. Or he always yelled and screamed, and it was always making us feel scared or something. And I hated that about me. And I just used the possibility that my days are numbered as the motivation to put things right.

Jim 49:38

Yeah, it's really powerful. It's so powerful. And I love that and I think that my mom has done that. And then with age, on top of that, she's allowed herself a little bit of, an exhale, you know, because she also knows that she might have two more years, she might have three more years. She's not old, but she's had a major stroke.

Jim 50:07

And so vascular dementia, stuff like that. And so the long and short of it is my mom is enjoying the time she has now. And sometimes to me, it feels like, oh Mom like, why didn't you call the dentist today to make the appointment? But my mom will say to me that I wanted to go outside today, and just have to remember that to my mom, that was the most important thing today, and that's fine. It's fine. She's given herself this space. And that's a lesson I need to take from her. You know,

Bill 50:46

I'm gonna ask you a question now just to bring this opportunity of growth and the

awareness that you have about growth and the things that have come from that that were unexpected. How do you see this personal version of you now relating with people in your life partners in the future, or friends and family and everyone else? How do you see yourself being different now, in those relationships?

Jim 51:15

For me, a big thing I've learned is that I can't control everything. For years and years, I was so successful at my job, and my career because I was OCD. I was a control freak. And I have a certain amount of talent in my industry. And I know what I'm doing and I have the right network, right connections. So if I just hung out about a nine out of 10 and I kept things moving, and then I made sure that I touched every piece along the way. Everything would come out, okay.

Jim 51:52

And people my bosses would be like, That was fantastic. You're under budget. The show looks great. Congratulations. I'd be like thank you job. Well done. Ever since the stroke, I've learned that I need to rely on other people. You know, I could not have gotten through the first year and a half without my mom and nurses and doctors and even now at assisted living, the caregivers and the nurse on staff. They're fantastic and they are part of our not team. They're part of our family really, you know.

Jim 52:28

So that's taught me to give up a little bit of control. It's okay to let people help you. The other gift you reminded me of this a moment ago is the patient's lesson. It's taught me just to be patient with her and patient with myself. And so now if I'm dating somebody new, or I'm starting a new project with a new partner because I work with a lot of producing partners, just take a deep breath and don't try to do it my way, even though I'm probably better at it, don't try to suggest that we reinvent the wheel every time.

Jim 53:10

It's okay sometimes to just sit back and let the process inform the decisions, rather than Jim drive the decisions. Um, and then just put people in my life, some people annoy the crap out of me. And I find myself sitting there and kind of looking at them with my poker face on. And in my head, I'm like, Oh my god, I should be so annoyed with you right now.



Jim 53:36

And old Jim would have gotten very new Yorker and told them off. And I just take a deep breath, and I let them ramble. And then I asked them a very pointed question sometimes to bring it back on topic or whatever it is, you know, or, or pointed out something I find that I don't understand or I don't agree with.

Jim 53:59

But yeah, It's changed everything about my communication pattern my patience with myself and others, and how I strategize relationships professionally and personally. And what I need to do now is like really put Jim first so I have more personal relationships, right? So I can practice these techniques, which is something I'm working on of course.

Bill 54:22

Yeah, you deserve that man and you've done a great job for your mom. Now, as we wrap up, if people wanted to connect with you, or just follow your amazing Instagram page, where would they do that?

Jim 54:38

I am on Instagram @iamjimlanahan. I accept Facebook requests too I have an I am Jim Lanahan Facebook page that is tied to my page. So if you just search Jim Lanahan on Facebook You'll find either the I am Jim Lanahan page or you'll find my page. And if you don't look like a crazy person, I will usually accept the friend request.

Bill 55:11

That means I passed.

Jim 55:12

Yeah, no you Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, we should be friends on Facebook. I don't think we are, but we'll make that happen.

Bill 55:18

I get such a laugh every time I go on your Instagram. I just love that it's there. And you take me on the roller coaster ride of emotions that you go through A with your mom and B when you're having a fun time. And even when you're just watching TV and you're commenting on one of the episodes or one of your favorite shows. I think it's just an absolute screamer.

Jim 55:42

Oh well, thanks very much. You know, as I said, I do find it therapeutic. But the other thing I find so gratifying is just being able to put a smile on other people's faces because I truly think the reason we're all here is to just make each other's lives better. You know, I'm a little Oprah Winfrey and that way, but I agree. So, thanks so much that means a lot.

Intro 56:04

Discover how to support your recovery after a stroke. Go to [recoveryafterstroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com)