

Cavernous Malformation at age 20 - Kawan Glover

Kawan Glover was only 20 years old and studying at college at college when doctors found a cavernous malformation on his brainstem, 3 surgeries in 3 years meant for some serious life lessons at such a young age.

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Bill 0:00

How did you feel about what had happened to you at age of 20 did you question your mortality? Like I did at 37? or What was it like for you?

Kawan 0:09

I think after I had the procedure because I was up and moving, I really felt overconfident, arrogant, I felt like I was Superman. But I think the month later one I had a stroke. That was humbling, you know, I went from being athletic most of my life to not be know to run or jump or you know, go out and be myself.

Kawan 0:30

Operate by myself without having some extra help. So it was a complete 180 and that I never saw this happening to you don't plan for things like this to happen, especially where I was in life. So it was just very detrimental to my self confident.

Intro 0:51

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

Introduction

Bill 0:58

Bill from recoveryafterstroke.com. This is Episode 83 and my guest today is Kawan Glover. Kawan was 20 years old when doctors found a cavernous malformation on his brainstem, which required three surgeries over three years to remove all while Kawan was studying at college. Now because I know that we all like to consume podcast episodes differently.

Bill 1:20

I make this podcast available on iTunes and other audio streaming apps for people that like to listen on the go. If you prefer to watch the episode and see myself and my guests, you can do that on the YouTube channel. And if you prefer to read and take notes, or highlight different parts of the episode for future reference, you can now download a PDF of each episode transcript and print it out and perhaps even get a bound and place it on your bookshelf.

Bill 1:49

That is something I would recommend that you do for episodes that you really like as it is a great way to learn and helps retain new information to memory. Just go to recoveryafterstroke.com. Click on the image of the episode you have just listened to. And at the very beginning of the page, you will see a button that says Download transcript and enter your email details and the PDF will begin downloading.

Bill 2:17

Now, I want to share with you that a few weeks ago, I launched recovery after stroke coaching the people who have signed up and now are being coached by me and are being helped to overcome challenges including fatigue, anger, isolation, amongst other things.

Bill 2:31

The 12 months of access, they paid only 149 US dollars. So if you are a stroke survivor that wants to know how to heal your brain, overcome fatigue and reduce

anxiety, recovery after stroke coaching might be perfect for you. If you have fallen in the cracks between hospital and home care, and desire to gain momentum in your recovery, but do not know where to start, this is where I can help.

Bill 2:54

I will coach you and help you gain clarity on where you are currently in your recovery journey, I will help you create a picture of where you would like to be in your recovery 12 months from now, and I will coach you to overcome what's stopping you from getting there. During coaching, I will also teach you the 10 steps to brain help for stroke survivors and guide you through each step with supporting interviews from experts and information that is based on the latest scientific research.

Bill 3:20

If you're one of the first 10 people to join recovery after stroke coaching, you'll get a one on one private coaching thread with me access to the course 10 steps to brain health for stroke survivors when released. Access to member only monthly group training calls and access to the stroke survivors private forum the first 10 people to join will also get more than 70% off the full price of 599 and 12 months of access will only cost you 149 US dollars.

Bill 3:48

Be one of the first 10 people who apply for recovery after stroke coaching now and get the first seven days free after the seven day free trial you will only pay the annual amount and the price of renewal will never be Increased for as many years that you stay a member.

Bill 4:02

Once the first 10 coaching packages are sold, the price will increase. And the \$149 offer will never be made again. So take advantage of the seven day free trial now by clicking the link below if you're watching on YouTube, or by going to recoveryafterstroke.com/coaching if you are listening online, and now it's on with the show.

Kawan Glover. Welcome to the podcast.

Kawan 4:27

Thank you for having me.

Bill 4:29

Thanks for being here, man. Before we get stuck into the conversation, tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

How Kawan ended up having a stroke



Kawan 4:35

Yeah, so back in 2014 I had a massive lesion they found on my brainstem and my symptoms got worse they monitored and I my symptoms got worse when I went home. So we decided to operate and remove it. And from what they told me they believe it was all gone.

Kawan 4:54

About a week later after that my first brain surgery, I went back to school and back to life I think I was 20 years old at the time. So it was no stopping me from getting back to more normal life. And because of that, it created an environment where I was one day, I think was September 17. I had a headache for 13 hours, vomited, clear fluid, I lost a lot of my vision, my right side completely became useless.

Kawan 5:20

I had a stroke recover for a month, year later in return, I had another lesion and it grew back in the same spot. October 1 2015. had another surgery. Everything was okay just recovering slowly so some deficit but I was able to maintain my lifestyle. And then right after I graduated, in May of 2017.

Kawan 5:21

About a couple of months later September, symptoms started resurfacing, they actually got worse I lost my there was ringing in my left ear that was numbness and loss control of my face up to my left eye complete numbness on my right side major deficits and became difficult to talk to eat to sleep. And then I had a last surgery took place on October 12 2017. It was a long recovery process and I'm still recovering every day but I'm here now and that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Bill 6:16

Wow man. So this lesion was it more of a tumor or

Kawan 6:21

So from what I understand it was the benign tumor they called it the cavernous malformation so that's a group of blood vessels that set on my brainstem which is why I experienced the deficits my motor functions. Actually just interviewed my first surgeon, Dr. Jonathan Sherman GW hospital. He kind of ran me through what they thought what they were thinking he quarterback, each of my surgeries.

Kawan 6:44

(inaudible) interviews actively involved you know, was overseeing people or recommend someone so it's called a cavernous malformation or cavernoma. Say for short and just, you know, when I talk to you about it, I realized you probably had been there since I was born, I just I created the right conditions to pull out the burst.

Bill 7:06

Yeah, we we tend to do that the thing is, I don't know, if we could create the right conditions for it to not burst just because of the way that we live life and the issues that you know we have to deal with and the stresses and work and all the things that we have to, you know, overcome. So, it tends to be this thing where perhaps it's a weak spot, and then when we give ourselves enough stress or enough challenges in life, you know, Something's got to give in our body and tell us pay Take it easy or slow down.

Bill 7:43

That's the way I talk about my own situation just so that I suppose it makes me feel a little bit more empowered about the situation now that I know that

potentially I created the situation to make it a little worse. Maybe Maybe I can create a situation that makes it a little better.

Bill 8:04

And if I can do that, then that's a positive thing. I'm not saying that that's going to stop a bleed of a cavernous malformation or an arterio venous malformation, like I had. Not saying that what we're going to do is intervene and totally stop it. But I think we could be gentle on ourselves for sure.

Kawan 8:25

Yeah, I think that was a big lesson I learned just trying to happen. You know, people around actually around me were just like, slow down, take it easy, you know, you're recovering still, like Take it easy. And I was like no. I'm gonna keep going. I'm going to keep going after it and you know, I suffered the consequences, but also talking about the slowing down and accepting where I am and just being patient with myself take time, years, decades for these things to write itself. So, you know, I'm claiming to embrace that this This year in this next decade, I really learned my final lesson just to slow the heck down, man.

Taking things slow after stroke



Bill 9:07

Man, you were 20 years old, like I get why you wouldn't be able to slow down too much. But I went through the same thing at 37. And it bled the first time. And I was all gung ho and I was all about, let's get back to everything I was doing being completely normal, which there's no such thing as being completely normal after

a bleed in the brain.

Bill 9:27

And then, and then six weeks later, it happened again, but even then, that wasn't enough to trigger me into having a different approach to my daily life or to my well being, but at this time, I had no choice because the deficits made it impossible for me to get back into the full swing of things. And then slowly as I started to heal and get better, I did get back to the full swing of things, but I did notice myself taking more time for me.

Bill 9:58

So you know, my experience was over three years, the three bleeds happened almost over three years. And the third one was about was nearly three years after the first one. And then that was the one where I really I actually had to wake up and really say, okay this is not a joke. You, you need to take it easy, and you need to understand that your body's healing and it's going to take time.

Bill 10:29

And like you said, it takes a decade and it takes a lot of other things that we need to do to heal. And that for me involved, you know, nutrition involved, meditation, it involved, sleeping better. It involves getting counseling. It involves so many things that I had never ever done before, that I really got a lot out of, and you just can't do those things quickly. Like you said, that take time and if not and if not a long time decades, maybe even.

Kawan 11:04

Yeah, and I, you know, even now I'm starting to really like I was into meditation, I think in between a second third procedure. But now I'm like making it is a must, as a part of my day when I get up in the morning, I do a set routine. Make sure I'm into the powerful state, you know, play takes positivity. I think also a lot of people that extra thing for your experience, neglect, the mental and emotional health aspect that usually comes during recovery when you don't have the doctors and people running around you just kind of by yourself.

Kawan 11:38

And I think, and honestly that was probably the most difficult part for me to accept where I was, at my age when I felt like us, puts me in prime of my life. But I was, you know, not at peak physical condition. So I think I made it extremely

difficult for me.

Bill 11:55

Emotional anguish is one of those things that we are go through for different reasons, you know, life, you know, experiences that are traumatic. You know, we definitely go through that at 20. And most people haven't gone through a lot of trauma. I know some people have, but a lot of people haven't.

Having a Cavernous Malformation at a young age



OVERCOME ADVERSITY

Bill 12:15

And when you get to 20, and you experience a health issue, you know, it's a big deal because just you're only 20 years old, you've only just been on the planet for a short amount of time, and now you're dealing with this potentially life threatening thing. How did you feel about what had happened to you at age of 20 did you question your mortality, like I did at 37? or What was it like for you?

Kawan 12:43

I think after I had the procedure, because I was up and moving. I really felt overconfident, arrogant. I felt like I was Superman. But I think the month later one had a stroke. That was humbling, you know, I went from being athletic. Most of my Life to not being able to run or jump or, you know, go out and be myself, operate by myself without having some extra help. So it was a complete 180 in that I never saw this happening to me you don't plan for things like this to happen, especially where I was in life. So, it was just very detrimental to my self confidence.

Intro 13:24

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

Intro 13:42

Doctors will explain things, but obviously because you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask. If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you finding yourself in that situation. Stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com.

Intro 14:01

Where you can download a guide that will help you. It's called seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke. These seven questions are the ones Bill wished he'd asked when he was recovering from a stroke. They'll not only help you better understand your condition, they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery. head to the website now, recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide it's free.

Kawan 14:36

You know, I had all these plans. I was like, we'll do this and. Then it was like, I gotta figure out how I'm gonna make it in this state. You know, how I'm gonna do all the things I want to do set goals and you know, I'm not in a better place where I am doing that. But at that age at that time, it was it was a detrimental I didn't question my mortality. Cuz I didn't believe it would happen again.

Kawan 15:02

And then when it did, I think it was interesting because I took a road where I sacrifice my internal feelings for the benefit of us. So I didn't allow myself to crumble outwardly. So other people around me wouldn't crumble. But on the inside, it was a lot of turmoil and a lot of doubt, loneliness, depression, anxiety, all those things you can imagine. So it was a battle, I'm going to say up until August of this year, internally.

Bill 15:31

I know with that thing that you said about managing the emotions of other people like it becomes our responsibility. Or at least we make it our responsibility to manage the emotions of other people, our loved ones, family and friends who

come and visit and I was doing the same thing, and I thought that if I turn up and look and act confidently, they will get a lot from that. And they did. They did get a lot from that.

Bill 15:57

The one difference is that maybe Because I was 37, I had already spent many, many years going to counseling and therapy. So I was visiting with a, with a counselor from about the age of 25. And for the usual, normal standard stuff, I had just experienced life, I was a young Dad, I was, you know, working, I had a mortgage, we had a my, wife was at home with the kids.

Bill 16:26

And it was tough, you know, so I needed a way to have an outlet and understand what I'm doing and how to set goals and that everything is going to be okay that it's all normal. And, you know, we just have to adjust our lifestyle because at 21 a dad at 21, that's a real big deal. So when I got to 37, one of the first things I did was I went and saw my counselor.

Bill 16:52

We're talking about 14 days after my first hospitalization which allowed me to start dealing with all those issues that we're talking about really rapidly. And then I was quite, I'm not I'm not sure if the word Okay, I still had all the concerns that we all have. But I was already processing those feelings and those emotions and I was already taking steps to address some issues, especially around my behavior with my children, and with my wife and all the things that crazy busy people end up potentially doing.

Bill 17:31

And not realizing they're doing and that for me, it was to be a bit of a cranky person, you know, angry and acting out and not nasty, or mean or, or violent or anything like that, but definitely not the happiest guy. And I started to address that stuff very, very early on. And I think that has helped me tremendously now that I'm almost eight years down the track.

Kawan 17:58

Yeah, I didn't get into counseling until after the second procedure. And even still, it wasn't even about the procedures or dealing with the stroke. It was other things in my life that I finished earlier, like different relationships, how I dealt with

emotion, things of that nature. So I didn't even start the process of talking about all the medical history until I was in my last stint of occupational physical therapy.

Kawan 18:27

We also had a counselor in the hospital, and I continue with her afterwards, and that was about 2018. But even now, you know, I just turned 26. So I've just had to get my new health insurance. So now I'm going to find a counselor so I can get back to the process. And, you know, also me writing the book I'm writing now, I'm, you know about this whole ordeal as a memoir. I call it "Favor how our stroke struggle and surgery helped me find my life's purpose".

Kawan 18:55

And that's been therapeutic for me as well. Just writing on those things down you live in that trauma, I think the first drive was more like a journal. But now I'm creating a narrative around, it's helped me see things that I didn't see before. And I think counseling, you know, through whatever you're going through is like paramount. I think it's a necessary expense, you going to call them, something as necessity for life.

Bill 19:22

That's an investment. It's not an expense. I mean, you're dealing with all those challenges that we all have in life, and then you have a stroke. So your challenges become even more dramatic, there's even more things to deal with immediately. So you've got to start chipping away at those little challenges that you've already experienced.

Bill 19:41

And like you said, the first few things that you were talking about or dealing with work, stuff that happened, you know, in relationships or whatever it was, and you hadn't even got to the point of talking about your stroke but how described to me how much of a weight off your shoulders was it when you talked about that stuff when you dealt with that stuff where you left it in the past?

Kawan 20:03

Yeah, I think you know, when I first learned counseling, again, it was a bar about stuff that was happening in college for college. And I think having if I would have kept that weight on my shoulders throughout this whole ordeal, I don't think I would be here because a lot of that stuff lead to suicidal (inaudible) deep

depressions and anxieties.

Kawan 20:25

So I would've went crazy a lot of it led me to a drug addiction, which stemmed from a medicine they gave on hospital called fentanyl, the addiction to pain pills and things like that. But, you know, addressing those things, allow me to step outside myself and see, you know, you don't need to add anything else to your plate.

Vulnerabilities are superpower



Kawan 20:43

You need to actually alleviate yourself so you can have the freedom, the state of mind, the mental real estate to address those things. So now it has led me to a point where I truly believe that vulnerabilities are super power. And me laying on my flaws and weaknesses on the table allows me to embrace whatever comes my way.

Bill 21:09

It's powerful as well man being vulnerable is powerful because you know what that allows other people listening and watching to do is it allows them to be vulnerable. It gives them permission if it's okay for Kawan, if it's okay for Bill, if it's okay for there's other people that we've come across to be vulnerable. Like maybe I can be a little bit vulnerable. Pick a safe space counseling is the perfect space to be vulnerable, and be vulnerable there man you won't get judged.

Bill 21:34

They won't give you a hard time about they won't give you advice or tell you what to do. They just listen, you know and let you get that off your chest. And I know that's why I was going to counseling is definitely one of the best things I ever did was allowed me to be vulnerable. And it meant that, you know, with my partner, she's not equipped to deal with all of my vulnerabilities.

Bill 21:55

She's definitely equipped to handle some of the conversations that I want to have with it. But there's some things that she's not equipped to deal with. So therefore, I didn't want to put that on her those certain things on her, it was better to put those in a place where professional could handle that. And then when I came back home after a session with my counselor, I could definitely go to my wife and say, hey, we spoke about this today.

Bill 22:20

And I feel really good about it. And I've let that go. I've put it in the past. I've learned something from that. And that's a completely different way for me to go to my wife and have a conversation with her about something that troubled me once. that's troubling me less now.

Kawan 22:36

Yeah, and I think, you know, as I've listened a lot of podcasts on this particular subject, we make our partners, our partner, our therapists, your best friend, like we give them so many roles, and even in my relationship, she was actually the one that encouraged me to like seek counseling because they were things she just was not equipped to handle. Like she can listen and sympathize and even empathize. Sometimes, but there is professional help that you should seek to really flush out those issues and they shouldn't be placed. That weight shouldn't always be placed in your partner because they can really ruin a relationship.

Bill 23:15

Absolutely. The one of the things that we spoke about yesterday on another episode, the one that's going to go live before this one with a teacher, a friend and a colleague of mine called Marvin, Oka we spoke about coaching. And coaching is similar to counseling in that in order to be the best tennis player in the world. You know, Roger Federer and all those guys, when they get coached their entire career.

Bill 23:45

They never ever go a day without a coach. And I suppose for them, their tennis coach would help them with other issues, amongst other things, amongst you know, the swing and the footsteps and all that kind of stuff that be constantly getting coached on their emotional challenges on their, you know, mental issues on all those things that come with being the world's best performing at your peak traveling around the globe, being away from family, doing all that kind of stuff.

Bill 24:16

They're constantly getting coached. And perhaps their aim is to be the best of the world. Perhaps Their aim is to make the most money ever. Perhaps it's to make, you know, to win the most tennis matches ever. But for us, we don't consider counseling and coaching as such an important thing for us because we want to be the best we can be in the world.

Bill 24:38

We want to be able to make money and survive and thrive and be able to cover all our outgoings. We want to be able to deal with our emotional challenges and all that kind of stuff. But somehow for some reason, the majority of the population thinks that they're going to be able to handle everything on their own.

Kawan 24:55

Yeah, and you know, even when I started my company this year, I ran into that wall like people will benefit from a consultaion and, you know, recession or whatever. But when you introduce like, this is an investment just to make you, you know, better equipped to handle things, you know life like, I don't need it.

Kawan 25:16

My question is like, what sport? Have you ever seen a championship team win without a coach? And they were like, no, and I was like, well, what makes you think you can win the game of life without a coach? And you know, counseling like you said, is investment as well just to me counseling is clearing that mental real estate so you can put more energy into things that you want to accomplish.

Kawan 25:41

So I think coaching and counseling are almost two sides of the same coin. They may take different types. I think counseling is more task focused. And coaching is more future focused. But I think they are key elements to a well rounded human

being I mean everybody I mean doctors have doctors, lawyers have lawyers. So why don't people have people that coach them to get to where they want to be?

Bill 26:09

Yeah, I definitely was looking for people that had gone through the stroke journey before me to support me in my stroke journey so that I could get to beyond my current, you know, pain or problem or emotional turmoil. I was definitely looking for somebody and I did get counseling, I did get coaching got a lot of things. But there wasn't anyone out there that had my unique needs, which was I needed to know somebody who had a stroke that was doing better.

Bill 26:46

And I didn't mind if their deficits meant that they were in a wheelchair or that they were slurring the words. I didn't mind about any of that. Because I know with time everyone gets better somewhere somehow they can I believe that can. So I was looking for somebody like that and there was nobody available. So I went and got the next best thing, you know, counseling and coaching, it works just as fine, you know.

Bill 27:09

So then that's when I decided, well, I'm going to be one of those people who helps other people get through stroke, and overcome the challenges that they need to overcome, which are the same things that I wanted to overcome. And what's interesting is that as you start to learn about counseling and coaching and move into that space yourself and start helping other people, there's another part of it is that as a coach myself, I get a lot out of helping other people.

Bill 27:40

It makes a massive difference to me. And I've noticed that some people in the community who haven't moved to coaching for example, still go and present and, you know, public speaking about their experience and how to avoid stroke. They still get up in church and they talk about their experience. They inspire people. They do less type of stuff and that makes them feel better and Isn't that an amazing way to feel better by helping others? It makes your stroke journey richer and better and makes it purposeful Did you find something like that as well?

Kawan 28:16

Yeah and crazy that I just had this conversation yesterday the you know, my

brother was just asking me how I've been feeling and I was like, you know, as this year comes to a close I feel great I feel when I'm coaching other people I feel like it's more for me almost than it is with other person because I get such joy and such peace of mind and that I'm putting a giving a person advice so they can gain from I'm doing it to my unique story and giving them the strategies to overcome whatever they're dealing with.

Finding your life's purpose after stroke



Kawan 28:54

And that you know, I said to him, like if I don't have an opportunity to share my story, to add value to be a benefit to other people then my life is kind of pointless. So that's why I go after it so hard because it brings me something that nothing else can. That's why I moved into coaching. Because it's, I feel I finally found my purpose like really you know, that's why I want to get on this podcast, just have a conversation with somebody who really understood and this fear, you really understand.

Bill 29:27

Yeah, I found my purpose. And it's such a cool thing to find. You know, I talked about that yesterday as well, man I talked about like, I found what I wanted to do when I grow up. You know, I'm 45 years old. And I just in the last few years discovered what I want to do with the rest of my life. And it makes such a massive difference because I get people contacting me all around the world, saying, you know, thanks for that episode.

Bill 29:53

And I don't need to worry about any of that. I just need to put it out there. And that attracts people to me. So I would encourage people that are listening, and watching to definitely do something that helps other people, even though you think that you're the one that needs help you probably do. helping other people is really going to make a difference to your life. Now you're 26, right? So, to me, you sound like a much wiser 26 year old than the ones I normally come across. Is that how you were or does stroke somehow impart some wisdom on what normally would have been A 22 year old party animal kind of guy.

Bill 29:53

This was a great episode. I needed to hear that I'm so glad that the podcast is around and feedback like that. It just drives you further and further to do more and more and to get better and better at the way that we offer services, you know, and the podcast is completely free, people don't need to pay for that they jump on, they get so much value immediately.

Kawan 31:03

I think the stroke that the surgery is the whole ordeal is given me a lot of patience and perspective. I think those two combined kind of aid you they make you focus and think about different things. A lot of things that were priorities are longer priorities, I think about you know, and gratitude. I think every day I get up my feet touch the floor.

Kawan 31:31

The fact that I'm alive, makes me smile, you know, after everything else after that was a bonus. Like the fact that we're having this conversation right now. It's amazing were talking to a computer, I'm alive and you're alive. You know those type of things excite me now where before was like the party or the girls or whatever, but now it's like, really for me is the small things like the fact that I can grab this bottle of water and drink it and I don't have that the (inaudible) in my throat anymore.

Kawan 32:01

It's hard to swallow you know the fact that I have a cell phone the fact that I can write still with my left hand you know those things matter so much more to me and because I had to slow down I was told to slow down so often in my own body I think that patience you know I'm no longer want printing out you know, when I'm riding I'm watching people speed up the red light and move so fast. I'm like,

Where are you going?

Kawan 32:30

If you have left earlier or if had plan you'd be fine. Like I'm no longer in a space of judgment. I just everything. I don't feel like if things are good or bad. It's just about what your experiences have been this about constructive you have. I seek understanding and employ empathy, instead of accusing someone or judging someone based on what they say or do I just feel like if more people practice empathy practice gratitude, and embrace patience and perseverance, and, you know, perspective, you'll be a lot more well rounded, calm, peaceful person. I think that's the state of the stage of life I'm life just accepting what is and creating what I want to be.

Bill 33:18

Yeah. It's like that about a man we can create what we want to have, and what we want to be and what we want to experience our life to be. And if you think you can't, well, you're right, you definitely can't. But if you think you can, you can. And that's the whole point about it is that I understand that people experience different deficits.

Bill 33:42

That doesn't mean you can't have a full, rich experience of life and make a difference to yourself, feel better, and also make a difference to other people. You your trajectory at 22 Before the stroke, what do you feel that If it wasn't for a dramatic, life threatening situation, do you feel that you would have this awareness about being calm about being patient, etc?

You need darkness to be able to appreciate light

Kawan 34:15

No, I don't think so. Because when you have a stroke or something, something traumatic happened to you, something is taken from you. You learn that you share appreciate things, you know, I talk about the adverse a lot. And, you know, if the world was always sunny and warm and, you know, now whether you wouldn't appreciate it, it was always light, you wouldn't appreciate the light because always there you need darkness.

Kawan 34:45

You need a little cold. You need a little adversity to appreciate the success that comes after it. I think everybody has their own fight and everybody has their own challenges in life, but I think this was maybe I'd go so far as to believe I was specially and gifted in life that I needed some type of refresh, restart and let me know that things are going to happen in life.

Kawan 35:10

And this will give you the toolset to be able to face those challenges. So I think I honestly believe that this whole deal, has been a gift because my mom has told me you don't learn these things until much later on in life. So now I have that perspective. Now, it allows me to live in the moment, embrace people fully and just accept, you know, sometimes you just get frustrated about little things.

Kawan 35:36

But now it's like, well, it happened no longer crying about it has already happened. Now let's see what I can do to move on forward. And I think that perspective again, has just been such a great learning curve for me because it takes some time, but I did get the lesson and now you're talking to you. So I think my life is going pretty well.

Bill 35:58

Surely is, you're an interesting guy I talk about stroke as being one of the best things that ever happened to me. If I say that to some people, they get a little bit a bit nervous about that. They go, well, it's not the best thing that ever happened to me. And in context, let me give you guys the context is the best thing that ever happened to me from a learning experience is no doubt about it the trauma I could have done without.

Bill 36:27

The, the surgery that maybe I didn't wake up from, I would have definitely prefer to avoid waking up and not being able to walk for a time. That was something that I would have preferred to do without, but when I reflect back now and it's been eight years, for me to reflect back, it's definitely been the best learning experience ever like you. I'm contemplating things I'm thinking about things that I don't think I ever would have.

Bill 36:59

If I just When about my regular life as I did, because I was all about working too

much making what, you know, making money, and not giving other people the opportunity to express themselves, it was just my way it was everything about me. And now it's not about me so much. It's more about everyone else. And I get to be a part of everyone else's experience of the world. And I get to be a good example of how we can change from the person that we were before to the person that we are now.

Bill 37:33

And that change is not the change that were forced upon me. That was the one that I chose, you know, to go down the path of change so that I could feel better in my own skin, so that I could feel better in the way that people that I interacted with people and when I walked away from an interaction, I didn't feel like I had judged that person because that's what I used to do like you.

Bill 37:59

I used to judge people Not that I did it on purpose, I didn't know any better. I used to see somebody in a wheelchair. And I was just assume that the only reason they're in the wheelchair is because they can't walk. I didn't understand the emotional issues that went with that. And all the other challenges that they have to overcome on a daily basis to exist in their world, you know?

Bill 38:20

So now I see somebody who is just perhaps able bodied, but looking cranky, and I'm figuring, well, man, they must have had some bad news this morning. Or, you know, they must not have slept well, because they had some dramas last night. And then that makes me approach them completely differently and allows them to come down while I'm around them, and I impact them in a positive way. without even trying, because I'm not judging them. I'm just assuming that like me, they're a human being and they've gone through some tough times.

Kawan 38:54

Yeah, when I first came out of rehab, we did outing and it was a group of people We're in the rehab center and we went out to washington monument and walked around. And one of the tasks were asked to complete was just buying something with some money and it didn't, you know, exchange the money over the counter and I just watched the way people that were able bodied would look at me and the people I was with and how it would take me too too long.

Kawan 39:23

Now, it's just like, this is the first time I had ever been looked at as an other. And this is the way I used to look at people that would not be able bodied or something seem to have disability, and I you know, just get impatient. And now again, this lesson this whole deal is like, there are so many people that go through things every day. I don't know what happened, when you left your house.

Kawan 39:48

So me judging you, that you're an awful person. I hate the way you are. Because I don't know I haven been with your life I may see for 10 seconds and make a judgement and now I think I'm more self aware to challenge that judgment within myself like wait a minute, you don't know where they've been you don't know what kind of month week day morning they've had so how can I sit here and accuse you of something that I don't have all the information on?

Kawan 40:17

You know and it goes conversely for people with their jolly all the time, you know you never know what's that going to and I just have empathy towards other people no matter who they are what circumstances are because, you know, I would like to have that empathy given back to me and I just think you don't know where people are in life. So appreciate that damn. Even in a conversation with a stranger appreciate that moment they talk to you and it just makes life easier.

Getting support from people



Bill 40:46

Yeah, it does. It makes life easier. That's a great way to describe it. So tell me about your family. Were you surrounded by family and friends when you were going through this? What was that like for you? Did you have support?

Kawan 41:00

Yeah, I did have support. I mean, the first surgery, I know my parents, my grandma, of course were there. But it was kind of like a two day thing. And then I had a procedure in two days, and I was out back in school. So you know, I was looking fine again. So people are like, Oh, well, he's my friend in school, just kind of mocking me, but I think it started when I start having these symptoms again. When I started having the symptoms after surgery, like, are you okay?

Kawan 41:31

Like, you seem to be stumbling around this still in college I was like, No, I'm fine. Don't worry about it. And then I had a stroke. And then people started to really pay attention. know if I was at a party, or ok and people pull me to the side, and this is, you know, there at 2nd surgery. But it was really not until this third surgery that a community of people tapped into what I was going through.

Kawan 41:59

I needed a new surgeon went to Rutgers University. And I knew this is a doctor that was gonna do it and It is great and we went to check on paperwork and financials and my insurance the didn't cover. So I had to go to another hospital to see different doctors. There was one doctor that literally came into the room me and my parents were in just like, if you don't get this surgery in three to six months, you're going to die.

Kawan 42:25

So my head, I'm like, so you're going to do the surgery? He was like, no. And he sent me to radiology and get angiograms different things of that nature. And I'm, you know, I was deteriorating at this point, you know, loss of talking, you know, hearing things of that nature. And then I started a GoFundMe in September that month. And within the first two days, I raised \$50,000 in the first week or raised about \$77,000.

Kawan 42:56

So I think at the end of this whole campaign raised by \$90,000 and you know, all those doctors that had dealt with me actually met up at a conference and decided that the doctor at Rutgers was going to do the procedure and after procedures insurance decided to cover the whole thing so one of the reasons I call the book (inaudible) because there are moments like that in my life where I can't explain what happened it just happened and worked on my favorite my grandma always

says favor, in your favor, is just favor.

Kawan 43:31

So I think the biggest rally around me outside of my friends look a started my family I started my business. (inaudible) was the third surgery, and the GoFundMe is still up. You can go read the comments, donations, I'm not asking for money anymore, but it's just up there to serve as a testament to the people that rallied around me and you know, now I'm starting to actually accept the fact that I may have been a better person than I thought I was because if I wasn't all those people wouldn't have helped so I have to accept that.

Bill 44:08

That's awesome man. So, amongst other things, you're a pretty good guy anyway.

Kawan 44:13

Yeah, I would say I would say so especially after a stroke I think that was really what made this change.

Bill 44:21

Yeah, that's amazing you know what's really cool and that money is always an issue for people going through stroke or any health issue but the stroke takes sometimes a long time to be able to get back to earning an income and go fund me and again, another blessing another amazing thing about the times that we live in, you know, we live in the best times firstly, you and I, two stroke survivors 13,000 miles away from each other, talking as if we're in the same room then.

Bill 44:55

That that takes away from me as far as I'm concerned isolation, you know, that minimizes The opportunity for isolation, then we talk about the surgeons and the doctors and the hospitals that are available to us. In these times, we've never had so much support and help from the medical world before, say 20 or 30 years ago, you and I probably wouldn't have been around to have these conversations.

Bill 45:26

So that's a blessing. And then you talk about how you can ask for help and you can get all levels of support, you know, direct support people that come and, and, and support you day to day just by being with you or in hospital at home or taking you somewhere to this amazing thing of GoFundMe and all these other formats that exists to support somebody raise some money and pay for some medical bills.

I mean, we do live in the best times and if we know how to take advantage of the tools that we have around us, we can really make a big difference.

Bill 46:03

So, you know, imagine being imagined trying to raise \$90,000, you know, 25 years ago, before. Before things like GoFundMe, it was definitely possible. But it would have been a lot harder. And that would have been a load off your mind knowing that if you need those funds, there are going to be funds there to be able to pay for your medical expenses. Because I know in America, there's a big issue on people having life saving surgeries and then leaving hospital and then having a massive medical bill that they have to pay off.

Kawan 46:46

Yeah, I have my own life with this system. You know, I think we're the only developed nation (inaudible) healthcare. And I just know that had it not been for my good fortune. And this situation that occurred to my whole ordeal, that I would have walked my medical debt. I actually told that it was about 1.2 million combined with everything.

Kawan 47:10

So I'm just thinking, How do I walked out of the hospital still recovering still needing some type of physical, occupational and speech therapy and counseling? You know, with that \$1.2 million bill in my back. How would I ever get back to a place where I could breathe again? It just grinds my gears that I don't feel like it used to always be like this. And again, these people, you know, when I was in the hospital,

Kawan 47:37

I wasn't thinking about money, I was thinking about living. So now, I get out of one stressful situation into another and that could follow me for a long period of time in my life. So I just hope it changes man. I really do but until then, I just pray for people and help everybody keep going and it is a challenge a struggle that people face on a regular basis.

Bill 48:07

Yeah. And how does medical insurance work? Is it something that you have to have before you become unwell for it to cover you? Or can you get medical insurance later?

Kawan 48:18

So, um, it's really interesting, like even get getting through your employer. And it used to be there are some plans, that's where our President Obama enlisted the Obamacare that AIG will cover pre-existing condition, because there are clients where they can deny you because you've had these number of medical injuries, and we don't want to pay for that.

Kawan 48:46

You know, I would have felt under that burden had not been for Obamacare there's also Medicaid, Medicare, for the elderly and the poor. You know, it is a system that if you have it in can work for you. You don't have it, that debt that piles up is outstanding. And at one point I had some bills that I didn't even know had they started to hit affect my credit.

Kawan 49:11

So, you know, it can go as far as seeping further into not only your health, life, your financial house? So it is a system that I think is to be rectified of some kind of way. You know, when I was in a hospital, they actually told me one time not to bring my tylenol because they wanted to charge me for a pill. So it's interesting the way that it works. The cheat of don't take that we'll give you some just so you can charged me. So it's all about the dollar bill and big pharma up here. But you know, I hope that changes.

Kawan 49:22

So tell me, what are the plans now moving forward for the future. I know. I saw a post just a couple days ago. You're doing a first podcast episode, you're planning on writing a book. What does the next few years look like for you?

Future plans

Kawan 50:08

Next, I want to say 10 15 years, I'd like to definitely write at least 15 20 more books. I like to start a media production company, write films, movies, things of that nature. I'd also like to venture maybe into music. I mean, I feel like this is spur some creativity, I really enjoy the writing process. So the books are definitely going to be a staple. I like to, you know, expand my podcast to get more listeners.

Kawan 50:41

And my theme for it's called favored podcast, just really digging the stories like yours and mine we talk about the moments that you didn't know whether it was going to be the end or not and how favored you are being played a role in that. But I just really want to continue, I want to start speaking on a regular basis. Want to expand my company, I want to start other companies.

Kawan 51:04

I want to invest in companies. I want to be an investor real estate. There's so many things, but I know the things I'm going to do for sure. Speaking, coaching, writing the books, starting media production company and continuing podcast, those are five I know for sure. And everything else, you know, sky's the limit, but those five for sure is gonna be my (inaudible) for next couple decades.

Bill 51:28

Yeah, sounds cool. Man. Did you end up finishing your college studies?

Kawan 51:34

Yeah, I'd say I just finished them this year. When I graduated, I had one more class. And I was finishing that and then the health stuff happened. So it interrupted that but I signed up for my course this summer. And I actually have my degree sitting over there. I haven't opened it yet. But I have it and that part of my life is complete. So it took me seven and a half years, but it's done.

Bill 51:59

What is the degree? what do you have a degree in?

Kawan 52:01

It's actually in finance. So, you know, in later in life or sooner than later, there could be avenue for me to go into finance in some kind of way. I've definitely had a background in business (inaudible) finance. So who knows when that will take me life is, you know, I tell people my ultimate goal in life is to live 80 to 100 (inaudible).

Kawan 52:24

So now I got about 75 74 years left. So who knows what could happen will get change, I could go to Australia. I was in Bali not too long ago. So who knows where I'll be actually my editor is in Bali in Australia, she's from Australia. So who knows? Maybe someone's called me to that spot of the world and see, what's possible.

Bill 52:46

Come down, man, we'd love to have you here. When so you finished your degree. You've got all of that stuff done. Moving forward, what are the physical things that you have to deal with now as well what are the things that you need to pay attention to.

Kawan 53:03

The foot track on my right side, there is a definitely lean muscle nerve and imbalance and that when I'm exercising now I can feel the lactic acid buildup and the left side of my muscles on the right side, it's just not really the muscles are working. Now build the acid build up. So a lot of my hand external right side, I got to continuously work on that.

Kawan 53:31

I've used as much as possible but again, this is just difficult. I'm dealing with the spasticity my bicep, the lack of muscle contraction in my tricep, my right leg just the calf muscles. The upward flexion dorsiflexion I believe its called? Other work on that it's just being more capital apparel. Having my brace on it is a company called my own nest actually gave me an electromagnetic brace.

Kawan 53:58

So when I walk it sends a signal to lift my foot up. If I don't have that, then it is easier for me to fall actually fallen five times I actually torn my hand up catching myself. When I need to react faster, these muscles kind of stiffen up instead of, you know, going out the saving, but those things, again, we talked about from the beginning just about slowing down whenever I moved to fat.

Kawan 54:26

That's when troubles right so I'm still that still a mental block because I know in my mind, when I'm mentioning, I see myself running and moving fast when I get up like whoa, like even the slightest turns here. You know, I used to get really frustrated, but now I'm just like, Scott funny, you know, like, this is just me accepting what it is and realizing that you know, It's okay, I'm not hurting anyone. I'm just taken care of myself, man. You know, I said my mom kind of like nervous when I do so.

Kawan 55:00

People, you know, if I trip backwards, like oh my god, so but you know, other than

that, I can cook myself, I can get around, I can talk, I can speak I can, you know, do the things that I value to myself on my list so I think, you know, I can work out I swim in Bali for the first time and like to this old thing again. So I think I'm I think I'm pretty I don't see myself as someone having a disability, I'm just able to do things different. And that makes me feel good.

Bill 55:37

Yeah, that's good man. And I know it's a for some people it might be a small consolation, but the fact that you had a stroke so young means that you have such a long time ahead of you to continue to heal and recover and, find ways to overcome, you know, the challenges that spasticity brings up for you, for example, or whatever and we don't know whether technology is going to you, you know, there's hope for the future, in that, we're going to be able to take advantage of some technology that isn't around yet doesn't even exist because it hasn't been possible until now.

Bill 56:15

So it's great that you're able to have that approach and to be comfortable with the fact that things are the way that they are. The fact is, we can't change. But we can't change. We just can't. And there's no point trying to beat your head up against the wall every time something happens, and you want it to be different. If it's not going to be different, maybe we have to be different.

Bill 56:39

Maybe we have to find a way to allow ourselves to experience life in a different way. It seems to me that the majority of your life is going to be experienced in this way, which was not the same as it was before the age of 22. And there's no reason why you can experience a full life being a little bit different to how your life the first 22 years was, you can still take advantage of the same things that everyone else is taking advantage of.

Bill 57:12

You have the ability to learn, communicate, get around, do all those things just has to be a slightly different way. And I say that from my own experience of a short amount of time in a wheelchair and a short amount of time not being able to walk. But definitely when I started to get on my feet again, I found myself falling over regularly. And I remember falling over at home holding a plate.

Bill 57:43

I just did something at the couch and I got up and I went to walk to the kitchen to put the plate in the sink and my left leg it was just gone. It was a sleep. I put it on the ground fell flat on my face and thankfully the plate fell out of my hand and slipped forward. So I didn't fall on it and break it like that it just broke other it further down the track. And it was that it was a reminder to say, just pay attention to your leg before you get up. Make sure that you can feel it. Make sure that it's on the ground. Make sure you're not going to fall over.

Kawan 58:18

Yeah, I've had definitely similar experience with like, just getting out of bed to use the bathroom, and it just wasn't there. And it felt like I was falling in slow motion. You know, I can talk to myself. Like I was like falling and I was like, Wow, you're actually falling. You're actually falling right now this is happening. And then I hit the ground is like well, prize winning man and now I just feel as have to get up sit before I move for the only trepidations I have on my future.

Kawan 58:48

I want to hit him something we talked about in the beginning. You know. I want to be a father. I want to be a husband. I just don't want this to limit my ability to be you know a dad you want to be chosen? And I think about that a lot now and I know also genetically or biologically I don't want to pass anything I have down. So I definitely want to make sure your you know, see if that's possible figure out that's handed down. But I think about that a lot. Like just think going ahead being a father What kind of father will i be you know, I can be successful? Am I all right but you know, I want to be able to contribute a full experience to my children. So, you know, that plagued me sometimes I think that's the only thing.

Bill 59:34

Yeah, I know saying. So my advice is seek out other people who are already doing amazing things in that space with being perhaps confined to a wheelchair or not being fully active or something like that. seek out people that are already doing amazing things in that space and learn from them. You know, and allow yourself to see that it is actually possible that is happening for other people already.

Bill 1:00:03

It's something that exists you're not going to be the first person in the world to be experiencing foot drop and specificity in the leg has children do not I mean, like,

you're not breaking any, any barriers there, you just be doing what other people are already doing. And that, hopefully will enable you to just get calm about that idea in the future because you're just stressing out about something that's probably not gonna eventually this negative version of fatherhood, it's just not going to eventually you're a good guy. You know, people think you're a good guy. You're doing good things. You're still have goals and ideas. And you sound quite wise to me for 26 year olds, you've had massive life experience, and I reckon you'll make an awesome dad.

Kawan 1:00:52

Yeah, well, I need to hear that. I think I just need to stop focusing on It and everything else in my life. Doing everything else I do with everything else in my life. Just focus on what I do have not what I don't have. I think that is something I need to focus on this year coming up.

Bill 1:01:11

That's it man, we definitely need to focus on what we do have. And we need to focus on our strengths. You know, we hear about people go through school and many years of school and they get told to do stuff like you're not good at algebra get better at algebra. And you never hear teachers say, well, you're really good at multiplication. Though. Let's use multiplication as your thing and make it make you even more amazing multiplication.

Bill 1:01:39

We get stuck on focusing on the things we're not good at. And let's face it if I had to do the things I'm not good at I would hate my day. Terrible. I'm not good at doing. I'm not good at reading books. I physically can't pick up books and read them. But I can listen to a book on an audio podcast and focus on doing it the way that I can do it. And I benefit from because I can do that anytime while I'm driving while I'm on the train. Now when I'm on a bus.

Bill 1:02:11

My mind doesn't allow words to come off the page and into my memory. It doesn't allow that. So I'm not going to do that I'm not going to force myself to get better at reading, because that's gonna be, that's gonna be terrible, I'm not going to enjoy that book. So that's what I would encourage you to do is like, definitely focus on your strengths. And you're going to be aware of your weaknesses so that you know what your limitations are. Focus on what you're good at, and you're

good at so many things and so on. So many other stroke survivors, they are so good at so many things, that if they gave themselves more time to practice those skills, they would see dramatic results and massive improvement, you know.

Kawan 1:02:55

Yeah, and I think you get stuck in a cycle of negativity like, oh, I'll never do this and you those thoughts and narratives you create for yourself. I, you know, I'm a chronic over thinker. So like when things go wrong, it's like me miles a minute questions, questions, questions, and, you know, what if this doesn't work and you know, now I'm starting to ask myself, Well, what if it does?

Kawan 1:03:23

And it changes rewires those thought patterns. So now, I'm in a place where, as I'm speaking, you know, even in this conversation, I'm able to pull out the gems and learn from that and incorporate it into what I'm doing and helps bolster my mental strength and emotional endurance. I think. Now, I'm at a place where I think the only thing really I had to work on is the physical because the mental is coming together and emotional is becoming better.

Kawan 1:03:55

Counseling are talking openly about, you know, practicing awareness. Being aware of your flaws, but embracing your strengths. I think that is amazing. I've never said it before. But now, when I write that on my wall somewhere, like, it's okay, to focus on what you're good at, And I'm good at talking, I can talk all day, I'm good at writing, I can write all day, I'm good at coming up with solutions quickly.

Kawan 1:04:22

That's what I do. And I'm not gonna focus on a thing I don't like, like, I don't like (inaudible) task or counting on, you know, I really don't like finance. When rest my degree, like I thought it was gonna be on wallstreet. But I don't want to do that. Especially with everything that's happened, my focus has completely shifted. So I think that is a key part of something that I'm definitely going to incorporate into this next decade. And I call it the decade of self investment. So that's what I'm gonna do.

Bill 1:04:57

That's a beautiful way to end the podcast, man. Thank you so much. Kawan I

really appreciate you for making contact and getting in touch with me. Well done on the work that you're doing well done on your recovery and I look forward to seeing what else it is that you achieve.

Kawan 1:05:13

Thank you so much Phil for having me and to all the listeners. You feel depressed down downtrodden. Just remember this too shall pass as long as you keep a positive mindset keep taking positive actions. keep giving and practicing gratitude. You good to go.

Intro 1:05:32

Discover how to support your recovery after stroke. Go to recoveryafterstroke.com