

Cerebral Vasculitis, Stroke & Identity Change - Adam Wolfers

Adam Wolfers is a father and a chef who has faced significant challenges in adapting to life after suffering from a stroke. However, he is making progress towards recovery despite the difficulties posed by the stroke.

The Cook Up With Adam Liaw
Instagram

Highlights:

00:43 Introduction

03:31 Adam Wolfers had meningitis

10:11 The ups and downs of striving for perfection

12:24 What is Cerebral Vasculitis?

18:58 Getting back to work too soon

22:05 The world doesn't stop when you have a stroke

30:30 Being on a cooking show with Adam Liaw

38:47 Pushing through the challenges

46:10 The hardest part of the day

51:20 Getting back on the bike after a stroke

Transcript:

Bill Gasiamis 0:00

Are you having a bit of identity crisis where you don't know exactly where you fit into the world at the moment?

Adam Wolfers 0:06

Yeah. Because everyone just kind of gets on with their own lives. I've noticed, I guess it's as I sort of slow down and do nothing. I'm kind of like, oh, everyone's just getting on with their lives. And it's a bit of a funny one. Not fun, but pretty scary.

Intro 0:30

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

recovery after stroke.

Introduction - Adam Wolfers



Bill Gasiamis 0:43

Hello, and welcome to episode 248 of the recovery after stroke podcast. My guest today is Adam Wolfers, a dad, a chef, a cyclist who experienced a stroke caused by cerebral vasculitis. Adam Wolfers, welcome to the podcast.

Adam Wolfers 1:00

Hi, how are you?

Bill Gasiamis 1:02

I'm well, man, thanks for being here. I've got awesome family scouting the world, you know, for stroke survivors that I should interview, a mate of mine a really good mate of mine was watching television in Australia here on SBS and I was watching a show that you were on.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22

It was a cooking show with Adam Liaw. And after watching the show and hearing your story, he goes, you should reach out to Adam and see if you can get him on the podcast. I thought alright, no worries. That's exactly what I did. And you're here. Tell me a little bit about what happened to you, man.

Adam Wolfers 1:41

So it all started, like this started the whole health scare basically started in the

start of 2022. So January 2022, I got like, I was on holidays from work during Christmas period. That was kind of like when the COVID scare that second or third wave happened up in Queensland and the whole of Australia.

Adam Wolfers 2:10

And, you know, basically, as my background, I'm a chef. And you know, it's a really stressful environment and hard working, and I've always been an overachiever in my entire life, which is.

Bill Gasiamis 2:29

Sounds like a predicament.

Adam Wolfers 2:33

Yeah. And, but basically, it all comes down to the start of my, accident it sort of started in December 2022. I got diagnosed with meningitis, who's like, the viral meningitis.

Bill Gasiamis 2:52

Brain infection yeah?

Adam Wolfers 2:53

Yeah. So it's like, basically the fluid in your spine, like your spinal fluid, which goes up into your brain. And that basically is like, it was, at the time, I didn't know what it was, but it was, it came down to having meningitis.

Adam Wolfers 3:10

And basically the doctors, I did all these tests, and they, you know, did a COVID test. And so it's like, it took me about 10 days for them to actually diagnose me with a meningitis. And so I had like, severe headaches, basically, like sensitivity to light.

Adam Wolfers had meningitis



Adam Wolfers 3:31

And so I basically, at the time, you know, it's hard to explain, but I literally couldn't get out of bed for two weeks. And I went to like, three different types of hospitals. And they basically, they were like, Oh, you're overworked and just go away and just gave me a Panadol.

Adam Wolfers 3:54

And then basically, after about 10 days, I went to my local GP, and then he was like, Ah, I think you have meningitis. So he did all the tests. That was my GP. And he did all the tests, and he basically sent me to the hospital.

Adam Wolfers 4:14

And, you know, I went to the hospital, they do all these tests on me. And, you know, I was like, I think you need to do like a thing called a spinal tap. It's like a lumbar puncture. It's not very pretty.

Bill Gasiamis 4:27

I've heard one. Yeah, cerebrospinal fluid test, they test the spinal fluid to see what's in it. For me, they were checking for blood, but for you, they were checking for the virus or something else.

Adam Wolfers 4:40

Yeah. And so they did that test. And then basically, they kept me in the hospital for a day because they do all these tests and scans on it. He can't tell what it is and for another 24 hours, so after 24 hours, they were like you have meningitis.

Adam Wolfers 4:59

I'm like Ah, okay, that sort of makes a bit of sense. And they were kind of like,

wondering where I got it from. But, you know, at the time was kind of like, oh, you know, it's just another virus, I'll get over it. And like, I didn't think anything of it, because I had no idea about what was going to happen next.

Adam Wolfers 5:21

And so basically, I took, you know, two, three weeks off work, just relaxed at home. And basically, when I got home from the hospital, I literally got COVID, like, two days after coming out of hospital.

Adam Wolfers 5:40

And I think that's sort of the combination of the two, like COVID, and COVID was nothing compared to meningitis. And that, you know, I was basically I had COVID and I took three weeks off work. And then I slowly went back to work. And, three months later, I had the stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 6:15

So the meningitis is a virus that says he a viral meningitis, when the meningitis is caused by a virus, the most common type of meningitis. Most people get better on their own without treatment.

Bill Gasiamis 6:34

So is that the idea of sending you home? And just helping you get over it? And so it's just affecting your brain, it's affecting how you feel? You're not able to do much, but it generally goes away.

Adam Wolfers 6:47

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 6:49

And are they treating it with medication anything like that?

Adam Wolfers 6:52

No, not at that time, they were just kind of like, ah, you know, go home, take a Panadol if it gets worse, but you know, I didn't need that at the time.

Bill Gasiamis 7:03

Okay. So meningitis, you can get by breathing in viral particles that have been sneezed or coughed into the air by another infected person. It doesn't sound like it's extremely infectious because you don't hear too many cases of viral

meningitis.

Bill Gasiamis 7:20

But it's spread the same way that a cold or a flu or COVID is spread. And you happen to pick that up, and then you happen to be at the wrong place at the right time again, and you picked up COVID. So the, how long did COVID put you out of action for?

Adam Wolfers 7:37

About a week I think the COVID was nothing compared to meningitis. But on top of that, I'm, autoimmune as well.

Bill Gasiamis 7:50

And what autoimmune condition, have you got?

Adam Wolfers 7:51

I have a sort of colitis, it's like a Crohn's disease, so yeah, I was on lots of nasty medications. So I think that's kind of the combination of everything. Me working too hard, you know, getting like that meningitis, COVID. And then basically, on top of that, I've been cycling very hard, like too much.

Bill Gasiamis 8:21

You're putting a massive load on your body. Basically, it's dealing with colitis, ulcerative colitis, it's dealing with recovery from meningitis, it's dealing with recovery from stroke, from a COVID.

Bill Gasiamis 8:41

And you're just going full on hammer and tongs. Do you always remember being that busy in your life? Was there ever a moment in your life where you've been able to do little or nothing and feel like you're actually contributing to your health and well being?

Adam Wolfers 9:02

No.

Bill Gasiamis 9:02

Just on the go?

Adam Wolfers 9:05

Yeah, that's it. Because, like, that's my personality and like, always, trying to

strive for the best thing or like always putting 110% in everything I do. And I think that's sort of the, the, you know, it's not the cause, but it's a contributing factor to the whole health situation.

Bill Gasiamis 9:32

Yeah. Are you a perfectionist? Is it does it come from something like that?

Adam Wolfers 9:37

Yeah, I'm a very creative perfectionist. So in my work, I was kind of like sort of high up in my field, not high up, but like stress is pretty high up. But you know, I can't really work out what had happened.

Bill Gasiamis 10:04

And at that time in your career, have you got people reporting to you as well? You're not just working solo?

The ups and downs of striving for perfection

Adam Wolfers 10:11

Yeah. I've always worked in like fine dining restaurants my whole life and when he is, like 20 odd years as a chef, and I've always sort of tried to over exceed in what I'm doing.

Bill Gasiamis 10:31

And there's an upside to that as far as career is concerned, people recognize your ethic, your talent, and the way you go about work. It probably does help with your career right?

Adam Wolfers 10:41

Yeah that's it.

Bill Gasiamis 10:43

Does it interfere with other parts of your life, other than your health and well being? Being always that prepared to go the extra mile at work?

Adam Wolfers 10:52

Yeah, I think, because I have two very young kids. At the time, while I was

immersed in my career, my career was always, you know, the number one. And so number one was my career, number two was, you know, my family.

Adam Wolfers 11:11

And so now I'm kind of like, once it's all slowed down, I'm like, Oh, wow, the world is basically around me and going longer out everything that that it does. And so it's been really nice.

Adam Wolfers 11:29

It's been a one year anniversary today from accident. But I think I've, you know, I'm still learning to, like, accept what has happened. It's gonna take a while. But I think that's the biggest thing is acceptance, that everyone's been saying.

Adam Wolfers 11:54

But I think, you know, it's been really nice, because at the moment, I'm basically not working. I'm in across paths at the moment. And, you know, it's been really nice to hang out with the family. So just, you know, seeing the kids go to school, cooking at home, all the little things that I never had done before, or got the opportunity to do before I now can enjoy it.

What is Cerebral Vasculitis

Bill Gasiamis 12:24

So then all in all that time, so you had meningitis, you had COVID. And then you had a stroke. Just after that three months later. So what kind of stroke was it?

Adam Wolfers 12:39

It was like inflammation in the left side, because it wasn't a hemorrhage, it was a blockage. And the doctors at the time, they were kind of like, they didn't know the exact cause of the stroke.

Adam Wolfers 13:01

Because they couldn't read my brain scan because they were like, Oh, this is such a weird brain scan. Because they couldn't give me an exact cause.

Bill Gasiamis 13:17

So they called it cerebral vasculitis. And it presents as a stroke. So something happens to the blood vessels and then as a result of that, it stops the blood vessel

for being able to send blood through it, perhaps narrows in size, and then as a result of that causes a stroke by a blockage that's not a blood clot, right?

Adam Wolfers 13:43

I don't know if I have, like they sort of said it was vasculitis. But, I have one of my luckily, you know, the guys I ride with they're kind of like, in the medical field. And one of the guys is, I wrote this down he's like a brain cancer specialist.

Adam Wolfers 14:09

So he basically, he can look at a scan and be like, Oh, I know that like there's inflammation there and so I basically saw my neurologist and he was like, Oh, I can't tell you exactly whether you can have another stroke or not, and I was just kind of wanted answers as we all do.

Adam Wolfers 14:29

And I got my friend in my cycling group I've just written this down here he's basically a neuro anyway, in the neuro field, and he basically said, he said to me like, I don't think the neurologist can read your scan properly, because it's really difficult for a public hospital intern to read that sort of scan.

Bill Gasiamis 15:21

Okay, so I understand. So basically where you're at is you're in a little bit of a sort of zone where you're not exactly certain what's happened, how it's happened, and whether it's possible for it to happen again.

Bill Gasiamis 15:38

Seems to be like a inconclusive stage of the diagnosis, and they're not really sure what caused it. So you're still in that process, though of being in touch with doctors regularly and seeing people regularly about this.?

Bill Gasiamis 15:54

Ah, no, they just discharged me from the hospital. They're kind of like you're on your own now.

Bill Gasiamis 15:56

How does that feel?

Adam Wolfers 16:07

I mean, it's okay. I was sort of, you know, you gotta get on with your life. But at

the same time, I kinda like always at the back of my head, I'm like, am I gonna have another stroke? That's the scariest thing. So it's, it's pretty scary.

Bill Gasiamis 16:29

What I would encourage you to do, not that you come along to this podcast specifically to get advice from me. But what I would encourage you to do is find another neurologist and get to the bottom of this, use your friend your cycling mate.

Bill Gasiamis 16:45

To get you into or whether it's he or somebody else to get you into the office of somebody that's going to be able to take you through the whole thing and give you some sort of a path forward. So you know, what's going to happen, and how they're going to monitor your condition. Is there somebody monitoring your condition in any way?

Adam Wolfers 17:06

So I have a well rounded GP, that she sort of looks at the whole gut biome, and she's keeping an eye on all my bloods and I haven't really got anyone for the stroke side of things.

Bill Gasiamis 17:26

Definitely do that men. And it sounds like, in order, are you writing things down because you're trying to remember them? And memory is a bit of an issue? Is that why you've had things written down?

Adam Wolfers 17:37

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 17:38

So have you spoken to anyone about your deficits and the things that you're experienced as a result of the stroke? That has made you feel a little differently than you were before?

Adam Wolfers 17:50

Yeah, I can kind of tell that it's a little bit of a delay. They diagnosed me with like, mild aphasia. And I've always got like that, I sort of feel that delay, I can't like, straightaway answer the questions really quickly.

Adam Wolfers 18:11

I have to think about it. And then it's sort of on-the-spot thinking, That's the hardest thing for me. And that's, you know, it's gotten better. But it's, you know, it's one of those things, it's going to take time.

Bill Gasiamis 18:23

Yeah, it will. And also, rehab Adam, have you had any one take you through speech therapy, or trying to determine where your deficits are, and how to improve them?

Adam Wolfers 18:40

Yeah, so I had intensive rehab for the first three months. And so once that was done, I just sort of gotten back to work and just chatting to people that sort of my way of recovery.

Getting back to work too soon



Bill Gasiamis 18:58

Yeah. And how much work have you got back to because if you were a chef, I imagine you're doing crazy hours. So what's it like now when you're back at work, how many hours you're doing?

Adam Wolfers 19:10

So at the time was kind of like I needed to get back to work straightaway. And, you know, I think I went back too soon, looking back on it. But I really want to get back into the industry, but I feel like in restaurants that's not really where I can

thrive.

Adam Wolfers 19:41

I'm sort of looking at like consultancy, and, you know, basically writing menus for other restaurants and you know, I'm just sort of hanging in there. Finding ways to make money.

Bill Gasiamis 20:01

Has it been one of the hardest things being unable to work.

Adam Wolfers 20:09

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 20:11

But you're at home with the kids and your wife. And you've got a little bit more time to do that. Is that special? How does that feel? Being able to actually spend some time with the young kids and your wife?

Adam Wolfers 20:23

Yeah, it's been great. It's been amazing. But I'm kind of like, at a point in my life where I'm like, in a crossroads, so it's kind of like stroke recovery, midlife crisis at the same time.

Bill Gasiamis 20:39

Yeah, stroke tends to do that to you man, how old are you?

Adam Wolfers 20:43

I'm 39.

Bill Gasiamis 20:45

That's a perfect time for a midlife crisis. Nevermind and 20 years of solid work in an industry. I get it how you feel like the whole industry, the whole thing you've done is like a really big part of your identity.

Intro 21:01

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

Intro 21:19

Doctors will explain things. But obviously, 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're finding yourself in that situation, stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you.

Intro 21:42

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. And 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.

The world doesn't stop when you have a stroke

Bill Gasiamis 22:05

Are you having a bit of a identity crisis where you don't know exactly where you fit into the world at the moment?

Adam Wolfers 22:11

Yeah. Because everyone just kind of gets on with their own lives. I've noticed, I guess it's as I sort of slow down and do nothing. I'm kind of like, ah, everyone's just getting on with their lives. And it's sort of like, yeah, it's a bit of a funny one. Not fun, but pretty scary.

Bill Gasiamis 22:34

Yeah, everyone gets on with their lives, because life doesn't stop around you after a stroke happens. That's the weird thing. Like I went through it for three years before I had brain surgery, and then was still on the mend for another one or two years after that properly.

Bill Gasiamis 22:47

And my whole situation started in 2012. And then I didn't get back to work until 2019. Now, I was working, but not in an industry that I wanted to work in not doing the kind of work I wanted to do, I was doing just the basic job in an office so

that I could actually have a job to go to.

Bill Gasiamis 22:54

And I wasn't very good at it. But I worked with a mate of mine who was my general manager who really turned a blind eye and protected me for about three years. Even though I was participating at work, and I was trying to do my best I wasn't up to the task at all.

Bill Gasiamis 23:29

So yeah, there's a massive identity crisis when I felt like I was in a bit of a limbo and trying to work out where to from here and try to find things to occupy my time with. And what I found was doing things that I enjoyed that were hobbies, fill the gap a little bit, because it was able to bring me a bit of joy.

Bill Gasiamis 23:53

And then from there, as I did that, it kind of filled my filled my bucket a little bit, and then kind of made everything else that was happening around me. Not so bad, even though it was tough time. But my wife had to go back to work full time, go back to work as per normal because she had the bringing the majority of the money at that time.

Bill Gasiamis 24:13

My kids went back to their life as per normal because they were teenagers. So they didn't really give a shit about anybody. Ever Fair enough. And then everyone else goes back to their normal life because normal life continues. The bills need to be paid, you know, work deadlines, or school or that kind of stuff. It all has to happen.

Bill Gasiamis 24:34

So they do that. And they do that not knowing what you're going through because they can't really understand what's happening on the inside of you. After a stroke like they've they can't actually get it because they've never been there.

Bill Gasiamis 24:48

You never want them to get it. And then you're the person who's stuck there and you're you have to take responsibility while you're recovering from stroke and all the other stuff you've been through. Gotta retake take responsibility for redirecting your life in a way that's going to move you forward, that's going to make you feel good about it.

Bill Gasiamis 25:10

And this type of resting is really about actually resting and getting better and recovering. Because stroke recovery doesn't take three months, sometimes it doesn't take six months, sometimes it doesn't take six years, sometimes it takes longer. And I feel like I'm still recovering. Even though I'm back to, quote unquote, normal life.

Bill Gasiamis 25:35

I still feel like I'm recovering every day. Nothing's really it's never out of my mind. And, at the beginning, it was maybe in my mind in a way that was stressful and that, but now it's in my mind of like, I've got to take care of myself more than anything else. And I've got to pay attention to my body. And if it tells me to rest and sleep, I gotta go and rest and sleep.

Bill Gasiamis 26:01

And if it's telling me I've taken on too much this week, I've got to take on less next week. And remember the lesson and try not to put myself in a situation where things aren't. All right, where I put myself back in the state, I was in before stroke, you know, that state where you're doing too much, and you're crazy.

Bill Gasiamis 26:22

And lots of hours and you're over delivering for everybody except yourself. That's, very normal, what you're going through, although it sounds like it's uncomfortable for you.

Adam Wolfers 26:40

Just gotta get used to it.

Bill Gasiamis 26:47

So what's the hardest thing for you to go through to experience in this time? Is it just is it actually the stroke? Or is it the shift in your identity? How do you kind of define what the hardest part is for you?

Adam Wolfers 27:06

I think it's at the point where, at the moment, I'm not working some kind of finding ways to make because my wife, she doesn't really want to work full time, which is the hardest thing. And at the time, I was like, relying on my pay is the full income for the family.

Adam Wolfers 27:35

And, you know, it's just, that's the scariest thing is like, what am I going to do? I'm just kind of just doing little gig after gig just to tie it over. We're not looking to save money, I'm not too sure if it's gonna get better. That's the whole uncertainty.

Bill Gasiamis 28:07

Yeah. It does. And it probably will. But what you're talking about kind of just breaking even at the moment. Yeah, yeah. Which is something that we did for a long time as well. Yeah. We had to break even for about, you know, five, six years. And my wife was working my main breadwinner, but again, we're only working three days a week.

Bill Gasiamis 28:36

And I was trying to squeeze in some work here or there, whatever I could do to just cover my my outgoings, but it was really hard. And that's why I went and got just a really crappy full time office job where I didn't really care about it, but I filled the role and made some money and felt like I had somewhere to go every day.

Bill Gasiamis 28:58

But, at the beginning, for about a year and a half, I had a lot of time to myself a lot of downtime. Where there wasn't much to do anywhere other than doctor's appointments. Are you okay with being with yourself? I was quite okay, being at home alone with my own self, but are you alright? Hanging out with yourself?

Adam Wolfers 29:22

Yeah, I can't get like I'm a bit more of a creative mind. So I always look for the next best thing. I can't like sit still. That's my personality. So that's been really hard for me because I've you know, like I can rest but at the same time, I can't rest because my mind is ticking over what I'm going to do next.

Bill Gasiamis 29:51

And does that mean you start a lot of things but don't see them through or just jump on to the next shining thing that comes along? Or do you normally start a project and see it through and get it to the end and then start another?

Adam Wolfers 30:07

Yeah, because all the places I've worked I've worked for like five years, five years, five years, five years. Six months here, six months there like, yeah, it's just, you

know, what it's like, I just can't really explain what's going on in my head.

Adam Wolfers being on a cooking show with Adam Liaw



Bill Gasiamis 30:30

But you managed to get on TV, and do this cooking show with Adam Liaw. So how does that come about?

Adam Wolfers 30:41

So basically, that happened about five months after my accident. So at that time, they contacted me via the restaurant, they were like, Ah, you want to come on the Adam Liaw show? And I was like, oh, yeah, okay, I can do that. And at the time, I kind of like, you need to do X amount of recipes, and you know, for a normal person, it was very stressful.

Adam Wolfers 31:13

But for stroke, recently, stroke patient, it was like, so, like, hectic for me, like, all the lights and the cameras in your face. And they basically were like, Okay, this take hear you, like, you need to do this, this, this, this and my memory, at the time I couldn't even remember, you know, having my phone next to me, for the five seconds before.

Adam Wolfers 31:41

And I was like, oh, and I was just getting really flustered. And they kind of were

like, they were really nice. But you know, they didn't understand what's going on. Yeah, but you know, it's, it's, it's pretty hectic, that kind of thing. Because they're, you know, you have like, you need to write out your recipes, you have other recipes ready, and they have all the food laid out for you.

Adam Wolfers 32:11

And then I sort of said to them you need to have you know, this food all prepped for me. So I can basically plate it up and send it like plate it up for the cameras like it was so stressful. I can't even explain how hectic it was.

Bill Gasiamis 32:35

So how long was the filming for?

Adam Wolfers 32:38

Filming was like, eight hours.

Bill Gasiamis 32:42

And it was like a 30 minute episode, right?

Adam Wolfers 32:45

30 minute episode. So there were three episodes in the day. So they did they have two more episodes after that ones they had like a chili garlic eggplant and a 15 minute meal. So there's another two episodes to come on their TV. So I did three, four episodes in one day, which took from you know, five in the morning through till 5pm that day.

Bill Gasiamis 33:16

And of course, that's not normal for a normal human being that's hard to do for anybody. Right. And when you've had a stroke, it's like, even harder.

Adam Wolfers 33:24

Yeah, that's it. Because they were like, Oh, we have a quiet room you can go in and they're quiet room was like really bright lights. And like, it's not quiet at all. It was like the complete opposite of quiet. And I like literally had to take my pair of sunnies and my, those like air pods and put them in and I was like, you know, putting on easy listening music, and I just was like, you know, I had a break for about half an hour. And I was just like, okay, I'm good to go. And then it was like, it's yeah, it was so hard.

Bill Gasiamis 34:05

Did they know that you had a stroke?

Adam Wolfers 34:07

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 34:08

Okay, so they knew that. But you don't look like somebody who had a stroke. Technically, right. You look normal. Right. So that would have been hard for them to comprehend. And kind of work out like this guy looks fine.

Bill Gasiamis 34:26

I don't know what he's talking about, you know, he just seems really difficult to work with because he wants all this stuff that other people don't want. And that would have been difficult in a 12 hour day for them. They would have been hard to sort of deal with somebody who's different in any way.

Adam Wolfers 34:41

Yeah. That's it.

Bill Gasiamis 34:45

And then you get through that and how were you the next day? How do you feel after you've done that? Are you wiped out?

Adam Wolfers 34:54

I live in Brisbane. So from Brisbane, you have to fly down to Sydney. That alone I needed like two days to recover from a flight. Say you fly down. So that was my first flight. Since that accident I was like, oh my god, this is so intense like, it's intense for anyone but you know, you get it.

Adam Wolfers 35:23

And basically, I went down on my own, on the plane on my own. And I got like I got picked up from because my parents live in Sydney. So they picked me up from the airport and just, you know, took me to the hotel room. And I just stayed in the hotel room for about, you know, I stayed in there for that whole a whole day. And then the next day, I was there filming.

Adam Wolfers 35:54

So I literally flew down on Friday, on Thursday, Friday, Thursday morning, got

there Thursday, after an hour, Thursday 10 o'clock, and then basically went to the hotel room stayed in the hotel room and just slept for eight hours. And then I basically wrote down all the all my answers, because I asked them, you know what questions you're going to ask I'll practice that all.

Adam Wolfers 36:27

And so I was reading all the lines before I'm going on, I'm like, oh, man, this is so hard. And yeah, so, you know, I just basically memorize all the lines. And then when I got to the filming of it. They were kinda like they changed the way they asked the questions. And so like, he saw what it was like sitting on a stool, talking to Adam Liaw and then another who's like, a personality.

Adam Wolfers 37:03

And they all sat there, like it was really awkward, was kinda like, sitting up straight like this. And I was really concentrating on it was daunting on the fact of them asking me a question. And I was like, okay, he's gonna ask me this question.

Adam Wolfers 37:23

Okay, and then I'll memorize it, and then just change the way I asked the question slightly, and then I was just frozen. I was like, Oh, my God. Okay. Just say, I just say, Where am I? Okay, just say that word. And then, you know, it was so hard.

Bill Gasiamis 37:43

So did you watch the episodes back? Did you have a look and see? You didn't. That's interesting, because I watched the episode contacted you straightaway after I saw it. And, of course, the person who told me to watch the episode told me that you'd had a stroke your stroke survivor.

Bill Gasiamis 38:08

And of course, then I'm picking up all of the challenges that you're going through, and I can tell that you're going through a lot of challenges trying to get the words out. And you mentioned a bit earlier about the Aphasia, the little bit of aphasia that you have like getting started in answering your question.

Bill Gasiamis 38:26

And I think they did a really terrible job in presenting you in the editing, presenting you as good as possible. Not that they should have edited that. I'm not saying that at all. I'm just joking. But I could tell that you're definitely still in the phase of stroke, where your recovery is still coming along.

Adam Wolfers pushing through the challenges

Bill Gasiamis 38:47

And you've got a little bit of recovery to do. Are you happy that you went along? And did that anyway, and sort of pushed through all those challenges? Or do you feel like it would have been better to just sit it out?

Adam Wolfers 39:02

I think at the time, I was like, Oh, this opportunities are gonna come later. That was my whole thought process in my head. And, you know, I don't regret doing it. But I think at the time I went, I feel like if I left it another six months, it would make it a lot easier for me. Yeah, I think you know, you can say you should have waited, either like or if you waited, the opportunity may not have been there. That's, the biggest thing.

Bill Gasiamis 39:44

Okay. I tend to agree with you just go for it and do whatever you can to get through it. I remember, early on in my stroke recovery, I got approached by the Stroke Foundation to do some TV as well. Some media, they came to our house and they filmed for about 12 have hours.

Bill Gasiamis 40:01

And there was about 50 people in my house I have a little house and they were everywhere. And we were doing some ads for Bupa, the insurer. And, the Stroke Foundation, they were working together and it was chaos, absolutely chaos.

Bill Gasiamis 40:19

And I remember being in my own house and not eating, and not drinking anything, just getting sucked into the whole production and waiting. Like I had food in my fridge and everything but waiting for catering to bring us the food and all that type of thing. It was so weird.

Bill Gasiamis 40:41

And we managed to get it done and got through it. And it was hard. But it was really rewarding. I felt really good about having been involved in like you I thought this opportunity won't come again. And it was just what the hell just go for it and do it. And then do the recovery later and deal with it. Was it helpful

having your mum and dad in Sydney with you? Did you catch up with them after the show again? Or did you just fly straight home?

Adam Wolfers 41:11

No. So I caught up with mom and dad while I was down there. It was pretty interesting.

Bill Gasiamis 41:24

It's an interesting journey. Was that the first time you had the opportunity to be on TV?

Adam Wolfers 41:29

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 41:29

I get Yeah, you got to do it. And you got to push through it. And even though it's hard, and you suffer while you're there, if you can get through it, like you said, with shades, and you know, with ear pods, just trying to keep the noises out and all that and somehow push through for a day or so.

Bill Gasiamis 41:49

And it's not going to impact you your health in a negative way. I think there's a lot of positives that come out of it. So it's kind of like worth paying that price a little bit to get this experience. Yeah. Yeah, sure. So I think I know that I think I've got a new career for you. If, if you opt for a career advice, YouTube channel, man where you're cooking meals at home.

Bill Gasiamis 42:17

Just do that teach people how to cook. But bacon and eggs or whatever they need to eat to get through, you know, stroke recovery, that's easy to make, you know, you can be the stroke recovery chef guy. How's that for a channel name?

Adam Wolfers 42:37

Yeah that's a good channel.

Bill Gasiamis 42:37

I say that because there's a lot of cool creative people on Instagram. One of them is a lady who I follow who has a page called Georgia bakes for brains. And she's had a stroke. She's somebody who had a craniotomy, so part of a skull removed.

And then I imagined how to put back she lives in Melbourne, and her insta is, Georgia Bakes for Brains.

Bill Gasiamis 43:07

And then she's just got all of the creations that she's ever put together. And she must make cakes for people I imagine she makes cakes for birthdays, that type of thing. She's super creative, and she just takes you on a very quick little journey of decorating a cake.

Bill Gasiamis 43:31

And I think a lot of people that can tend to be kind of therapeutic sort of being somebody who has got the skills that you've got. That might be therapeutic and help you sort of feel like your identity is still alive and well.

Adam Wolfers 43:56

Yeah, that's a great idea. I just yeah, I'm kind of at the moment. I'm kind of I don't know what to do.

Bill Gasiamis 44:04

Yeah. I hear you man, I know. I'm not expecting you to be a YouTube chef tomorrow. Well, I thought I'd just chuck it out there. Maybe it sits if it doesn't, doesn't it. It's alright. So what's it like dealing with the kids, man? Are they little?

Adam Wolfers 44:20

Yeah, so I have a three year old and a six year old. So that was pretty tough. Because, you know, the, for the first six months, I was like, I didn't quite understand the whole over sensory overload sort of thing. And so they're screaming and, you know, carrying out they don't, you know, the little they don't understand that, but daddy looks normal.

Adam Wolfers 44:50

And at the time, you know, I wanted to be with them. But, like, I couldn't because I literally did noise and screaming and the carrying on I couldn't handle it. Yeah. Yeah, I got I got better at it. I got those air pods and just put on nice calming music in the morning. But my son is on and cooked breakfast and that that got through it. Wow. Yeah, so that was a way of getting through it. But you know it was it was. It's really good now. Yeah. it's much better now.

Bill Gasiamis 45:28

Yeah. Kids don't really care what's happening to you. They're just gonna be themselves, right.

Adam Wolfers 45:33

Yeah, that's it.

Bill Gasiamis 45:34

And it's kind of good. But at the same time, it's kind of really hard. And little kids require a lot of energy. And they just expect you to turn up and be there for them and do everything you've always done. They don't really mind. So cooking in the morning with Sunnies and earpods on yeah?

Adam Wolfers 45:55

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 45:56

Is the morning, the hardest part of the day for you? And you live in sunny Queensland. So it's bright all the time. Is it the hardest part of the day for you? Or is the other parts of the day where it feels a bit harder.

The hardest part of the day for Adam Wolfers

Adam Wolfers 46:10

I think the morning is probably the easiest part of the day. Because it's hard to explain that like in Queensland, everyone's up at 5am. And so everyone's doing things from 5am in the morning. And so that's sort of, that's sort of easier for me, because I have two young kids, and they're up at five o'clock already. So that's been my morning thing. And, but I find like, as I get to about two or three o'clock in the afternoon, I then start to get really lethargic and just need to lie down for half an hour, and then I'm going to go.

Bill Gasiamis 46:51

Recharge, two or three in the afternoon. So how does the lethargy come about? Do you notice that you're talking suffers? Do you notice that other things sort of get a little bit strokey? Do you have like, the symptoms get worse?

Adam Wolfers 47:09

like because I like my right side got affected. And so I find that, like when I my way, my right side of my body like basically becomes a lot weaker, and I can't use it as well. And that's sort of the first point of part of my body that is, um, you know, noticeable.

Bill Gasiamis 47:33

Yeah. And it's telling you, you're tired. And you need a rest. Yeah. Bit of a cat nap. And then you're up. Yeah. And you're sleeping. All right, you're getting through the night with a decent amount of sleep waking up feeling like you've had a good amount of sleep.

Adam Wolfers 47:50

Yeah, I don't know. Yeah. So for a while, I was like, literally teaching myself how to sleep. And then. So that was, that was the hardest thing is like, teaching yourself how to sleep again. And that was, you know, it was so easy for me to sleep. Because I basically did a lot during the day, go to bed and wake up the next day, and so I had to relearn myself how to sleep. So, you know, I'm using meditation and, you know, using those air pods just before I go to sleep, deep breathing, I just had to relearn myself how to do all that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 48:33

What sort of hours were you keeping? As a chef? Were you up at the crack of dawn? Or were you going home really late at night? Or both?

Adam Wolfers 48:39

So I was so to mention before I was a cyclist, so I was up at about 4am And then I cycled you know, to three hours in the morning, then I'd come home, make breakfast for the kids. And then I just you know, relax for about an hour go into work at 10 o'clock. And so 10 o'clock till midnight. Well, and then I'd only cycle once every two days. But I think that was an ongoing thing to basically.

Bill Gasiamis 49:18

So up at four. And then you finish at midnight. And then you go home. How long does it take you to get home and then fall asleep? What you're gonna see back in 15 minutes and then you're having a shower winding down. And you're getting three hours a night of sleep some nights sometimes. It's still feeling 100% good to go the next morning.

Adam Wolfers 49:49

That's probably too much.

Bill Gasiamis 49:52

That's too much for anybody, of course. But what's interesting is that you got to do it for that long for such a long time was that something that you were doing for many, many years.

Adam Wolfers 50:02

I was doing that for about three years.

Bill Gasiamis 50:09

Did you feel that it was good for you?

Adam Wolfers 50:12

Yeah. Amazing. That was my happy place my cycling it's my outlet.

Bill Gasiamis 50:21

And you just somehow got taken away.

Adam Wolfers 50:23

That was like, I felt really lost.

Bill Gasiamis 50:29

Have you been able to cycle since? Yep. I can see you back on the bike. Yeah. So

Adam Wolfers 50:34

literally, six weeks at a hospital, I have like a one of those Wahoo trainers I was on the train are like six weeks out of hospital. I could only do like, you know, 10 minutes, and then I'll do 20 minutes, and I'll do 30 minutes. And I sort of, like incrementally do that over the course of you know, like, after about two weeks out of hospital. I was riding 40 Ks.

Bill Gasiamis 51:07

That's pretty good man, you don't muck around.

Adam Wolfers 51:09

Yeah, I mean, it's kind of like, I want to get back to what I was before. But, you know, I've kind of realized that I can't.

Getting back on the bike after a stroke



Bill Gasiamis 51:20

You've let it go a little? Right. So now, how many kilometers are you doing on 40 kilometres is 26 mile for anyone wondering somewhere there. So how many kilometers are you doing now?

Adam Wolfers 51:36

So I'm doing I can only do 40k. So I can only do 40 kilometers at a time.

Bill Gasiamis 51:42

Only?

Adam Wolfers 51:45

But I can only do that once or twice a week now. Yeah, one to two times a week. But after a ride. Like I'm basically done for half the day.

Bill Gasiamis 51:56

Wiped out?

Adam Wolfers 51:57

Yeah, wiped out.

Bill Gasiamis 51:58

I remember that. Because I used to, I didn't have those issues that you had about cycling, I don't need to do 1000 kilometers a week. So I just used to ride just as a different way to get to a destination without walking or driving. Right? That was

all and just really leisurely. I've even got a little speaker that I cable tie to the back of my seat underneath my seat.

Bill Gasiamis 52:27

And I just put the iTunes or Spotify on and I just blare out dance music as I'm riding along the bike path, right, it's so cool. So that's why I did it. And then when I couldn't get back on the bike again, I was really devastated as well.

Bill Gasiamis 52:45

Because when I did get on the bike, my left side got tired, far quicker than my right side and I fatigue immediately. And then I couldn't feel my arm and leg and my leg would fall off the pedal. And then putting my leg down my left leg down to balance, I wouldn't feel my leg.

Bill Gasiamis 53:00

So I'd fall off the bike. It was just a nightmare. So I stopped riding. And then I found an electric bike. So battery operated, helps you with the pedaling that made a massive difference to how much fatigue my leg and my arm felt.

Bill Gasiamis 53:16

And I was able to ride for longer. So now I might do 10 kilometers or 20 kilometers in a ride. That could take hours, it's not going to I don't need I don't need to do it fast. I just need to get it down. Right. So that was what was really cool about it.

Bill Gasiamis 53:32

And then I got to the point of once I had managed to find the electric bike and get on the I got to the point where that fatigue of I did a 20 Kilometer ride in the morning. And now I'm wiped out for the rest of the day that started to shrink that I got I was later then I wasn't wiped out for the whole day, I was wiped out for three quarters of the day and then for half the day and then for a little bit of time and then for half an hour or an hour.

Bill Gasiamis 54:01

So right now if I go for a ride, then I just take a rest for an hour or two, and a really, really good after it. But that that's what gets better. And I feel the more you exercise. It is really beneficial to you. So it's definitely worth doing.

Bill Gasiamis 54:17

But over exercising is something that you've got to be careful about. And I'm glad that you're at that stage where you've realized that I still enjoy my ride but only twice a week and then all I'll rest. Are you still waking up at four in the morning to do that ride?

Adam Wolfers 54:34

Oh, no, no, like, I'll go about 5am it's just it's hard to explain but like in Queensland you kind of go earlier because it gets really hot by about seven o'clock, right? by 7am and start like it gets like the humidity is very different up here.

Adam Wolfers 54:56

Although everyone is out and about all the cyclists around at five in the morning 5:30. I'm really grateful that I can ride my bike. That's, that's the most important thing. Yeah, I'm not doing it for a job. I'm doing it as a, like, enjoyment now.

Bill Gasiamis 55:23

Yeah. Have you so now it's now it's about enjoyment and supporting your recovery and it's about healthy for healthy reasons. It's probably taking you into the same quiet space, he's still going into that same quiet space helping you out with your mental well being I imagine.

Adam Wolfers 55:41

Yeah, does definitely.

Bill Gasiamis 55:44

You're the kind of guy to seek out help. When you're going through a tough time or struggling before stroke. Were you the type of guy did you need guidance and support from other people were just able to push through

Adam Wolfers 55:56

knives? Is that a little push there? Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 56:00

So changed a little bit now. Have you been able to?

Adam Wolfers 56:03

Um, I think it's pretty much the same. Like but, you know? It's It's just different. It's just like, I don't, I don't. Yeah. Kinda like, I feel that I'm different. But I don't

want to be different. That's sort of where I'm at.

Bill Gasiamis 56:33

So part of us going let's hold on to the old atom. Yeah. And the other part is going there's definitely a new atom. And is it about transitioning and trying to embrace the new atom at some stage and trying to feel comfortable with that?

Adam Wolfers 56:49

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 56:50

Stroke tends to do that really rapidly. Aging does that a little bit slower, it gives you a little bit more time to go. Shoot, I noticed that ache ache in my back. So I'm gonna take it easy, or your toe hurts, or I'm not as fit as I used to be. You have a gradual kind of understanding of how you're changing and how you need to adapt to go go through life.

Bill Gasiamis 57:16

But stroke just does it overnight. Big difference? Yeah. That's the hardest part. For people to adjust to a lot of people can't adjust to that change. That happens so rapidly, because they're caught up in it three minutes ago, I was all these other things. I was a chef who worked 14 hours a day. I was a dad, I was a cyclist, I did all these things.

Bill Gasiamis 57:43

And now what overnight? I'm not all those things anymore. What? What am I what do I do? How do I get along? If anyone finds himself in that situation, then what I do is try encourage them to just be in that space. So in the space of your lifetime, you've gone through about 40 years of life.

Bill Gasiamis 58:03

And then in in the space of 40 years, this time, this one year, even if it's two years of time where you're not sure or certain about things, it's not a long amount of time. While you're in it, it feels long. The reality is it's not long, it's a very short amount of time, and it's gonna go really fast. And you'll get through it.

Bill Gasiamis 58:28

And it's you've got to find a unique way that supports your thinking and supports the way you'd like to go about life to get through it in your own unique way.

That's that's the challenging part. It's like how do you adapt and change? It's sometimes reaching out to other people can help you with that. Counseling coaching. Mentor, anyone who understand your condition and what you've been through, could sort of help that and make it make the transition a little easier, perhaps or perhaps not.

Adam Wolfers 59:05

No, I'm agreeing with you.

Bill Gasiamis 59:09

It doesn't matter. How does talking for a long time impact you going through a conversation like this? Does that make you tired, fatigued?

Adam Wolfers 59:21

It gets me like I can talk for about you know, 30, 40 minutes and then I start to get really lethargic like I am right now.

Bill Gasiamis 59:31

Yeah I noticed. That's why I asked.

Adam Wolfers 59:37

It's gotten better because for the first you know, two, three months like or six months, seven months, I like literally had a conversation for 10 minutes and I'll be like, I'm done. So it's gotten much better. I couldn't have done this like three months ago.

Bill Gasiamis 59:55

Yeah, you know what man? On that note though? I'm good. gonna let you get back to the rest of your day. I really appreciate you saying yes. And coming on to the podcast, when I reached out. I love what you're doing as far as still trying to get through this and adjusting and finding new ways to do yourself. And if you ever decide to do the food YouTube channel, I'll fly to Brisbane. And I can be your guest on your show, and you can show me how to prepare meal.

Adam Wolfers 1:00:28

Cool. All right. Thank you so much for having me on the show.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:32

My pleasure, man. Thank you for being here. Thanks for joining us on today's

episode to learn more about my guests, including links to their social media and other pages. And to download a full transcript of the entire interview.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:45

Please go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes. If you would like to try the course five foods to avoid after stroke, go to recoveryafterstroke.com/courses and get on board now. If you would like to support this podcast, the best way to do it is leave the show a five star review and a few words about what it means to you.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:07

The more comments that we get, the more reviews that we get, the more popular the show will become. And that will make it possible for other people who are going through what you're going through to find it. And that will hopefully make it better for them.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:21

If you remember what it was like when you found the podcast and what a difference it made to you. Well, hopefully, what we're going to do is make it possible for other people to find the podcast as well and have a better stroke recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:36

Now if you're a stroke survivor with a story to share about your experience, come and join me on the show that interviews are not scripted, you do not have to plan for them. All you need to do to qualify as being a stroke survivor, or care for someone who is a stroke survivor will be one of the fabulous people who work in the field that help stroke survivors.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:56

Go to recoveryafterstroke.com/contact fill out the contact form and as soon as I receive your request. I'll respond with more details on how you can choose a time that works for you and me to meet over zoom. Thanks again for being here and listening. As my voice goes croaky, I really appreciate you see you on the next episode.

Intro 1:02:16

Importantly, we present many podcasts designed to give you an insight and understanding into the experiences of other individuals opinions and treatment protocols discussed during any podcast are the individual's own experience and

we do not necessarily share the same opinion nor do we recommend any treatment protocol discussed.

Intro 1:02:34

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Intro 1:02:56

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Intro 1:03:18

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Intro 1:03:38

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