

Cryptogenic and Ischemic Stroke Recovery - Vinny Valentino

Vinny Valentino was on tour playing guitar with his band when he experienced a Cryptogenic and Ischemic stroke. A year later he is starting to get back to playing guitar once more.

Socials:

<https://www.instagram.com/vvguitar/>

<http://vinny.com>

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Vinny 0:00

Have you found yourself reflecting on those really tough moments when you thought, man, this is too hard, I can't do it anymore or I don't want to do this anymore. And then you've pushed through.

Vinny 0:10

Yeah, you know, as a matter of fact, I am fortunate enough to have a lot of documentation from the early years and lots of video and lots of audio. Lots of

records that I've been on that I've done myself that I listened to, and I just at first, it was difficult to listen to those things.

Vinny 0:31

And I still look at video and go, Wow, now I've gotten to the point where I am performing again, I'm comfortable with the way I am, and I've gotten myself to the point where I feel comfortable in what I can present as a musician still still has value.

Intro 0:57

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

Vinny 1:09

Alone Welcome to recovery after stroke a podcast full of answers, advice and practical tools for stroke survivors to help you take back your life after a stroke and build a stronger future.

Bill 1:21

I'm your host three times stroke survivor Bill Gasiamis. After my own life was turned upside down and I went from being an active father to being stuck in hospital. I knew if I wanted to get my life back to the one I loved before my recovery was up to me.

Bill 1:37

After years of researching and discovering I'll learn how to heal my brain and rebuild a healthier and happier life than I ever dreamed possible. And now I've made it my mission to empower other stroke survivors like you to recover faster, achieve your goals and take back the freedom you deserve.

Bill 1:54

If you enjoy this episode and want more resources, accessible training, and hands on support, check out my recovery after stroke membership community, created especially for stroke survivors and caregivers. This is your clear pathway to transform your symptoms, reduce your anxiety, and navigate your journey to recovery with confidence.

Introduction - Vinny Valentino



Bill 2:15

Head to recoveryafterstroke.com to find out more after this podcast but for now, let's dive right into today's episode. This is episode 168 And my guest today is the one and only Vinny Valentino. Vinny is a professional musician and plays the guitar for a living and while playing on stage during a 2020 tour. Vinny experienced an ischemic and cryptogenic stroke. Vinnie Valentino welcome to the podcast

Vinny 2:48

Man it's really an honor to be here and thank you for doing this you know, the whole thing the recovery after stroke podcast has been a godsend for me and I'm sure many other people.

Vinny 3:03

Well thank you for saying so. I really appreciate it. Is Vinny Valentino a stage name?

Vinny 3:12

Actually, no. You know, my name is Vincent. And Italian it's Vincenzo, in Spanish it's Vicente. And you know, so I answered any and all those versions of it.

Vinny 3:31

Man, it's straight out of you know that era of Frankie Valli and the four seasons. You know, Vinny Valentino's, sounds like you could have been a band member easy.

Vinny 3:41

Yeah, you know, I don't know if my parents had this in mind when they picked that name, but that's what came of anyway.

Vinny 3:53

I love it. Tell me a little bit about what happened to you, man?

Vinny Valentino Stroke

Vinny 3:57

Well, you know, I have been a professional musician, really all my life. I've been playing and making money at playing the guitar since I was 12 years old. And playing the guitar as early as the age six you know, and so as a result, you develop yourself you do local gigs and then eventually hopefully you'll go on tour.

Vinny 4:33

And if that's the kind of thing you know, many people teach there's all kinds of avenues for professional musicians and you have to be pliable to be able to make a living at this. Anyway, I was the type that occasionally went on tour and I you know, acquired this gig and in two 2004 with Steve Smith and vital information.

Vinny 5:04

And Steve Smith is for those of you who don't know, he is the drummer for the rock band Journey. Which, you know, everybody knows, you know, don't stop believing and all those hits, you know, he was a big part of that.

Vinny 5:25

Anyway, but he has a jazz band and I have been lucky enough to be involved in that band since officially since 2006, but I've been playing with him since 2004. Fast forward, you know, I've played with many people along the way and, fast forward to 2020 We are preparing for a tour of Asia.

Vinny 6:02

And the pandemic starts to strike. We slowly lose all the dates that we had in China, obviously, and we had two weeks in China, we lost all those dates. And then we lost the week in Japan, we were going to be there as well.

Vinny 6:27

And what was left was flying out to the West Coast, I mean, Los Angeles and then

flying from there to your hometown of Melbourne, Australia. And, but it wasn't to be for me, because, you know, three days into the tour, I developed symptoms, you know, the night before I noticed anything happening, but but basically I had a stroke on stage.

Vinny 7:07

And you know, that was the extent of it. I mean, I was in total denial, like a lot of people I've seen on your podcast. I kept telling you know, some good friends of mine came to see me play the last night that we were at Catalina's, we're at Catalina's jazz club in Los Angeles.

Vinny 7:40

And Steve noticed something during the soundcheck he said what's going on? And I said, you know, I have no idea. And luckily, we had a pianist that was good enough to cover me on the musical places where I was, you know, not making it.

Vinny 8:06

Anyway, the set went off. Okay. And after the set, you know, they immediately started saying what's happening and I had some aphasia. You know, I couldn't explain what I wanted to, I was incredibly emotional, you know, as matter of fact, I was crying like a little girl, you know, at times and, we know now that that's a symptom of the stroke, but I was in total denial.

Vinny 8:45

I was telling my, my good friend who is the, the proprietor and promoter for the drum fantasy camp, it's a world-famous camp that goes on every year, which I've been the musical director for 15 years. And it's one of the most fun things that I do all year long.

Identifying The Stroke Symptoms

Vinny 9:09

Anyway, he was in the audience and recording and doing some other things. And he noticed right away because I missed a meeting that I was supposed to have with him. And he said, Wait a minute, he knew something was wrong, right then in there when I missed the meeting.

Vinny 9:31

So talking to me backstage, he said, I'll never forget this. He said, I think we

should go to UCLA. I went what? You know, I was in denial, I was not thinking stroke. And he just kept pressing me. It took about an hour or two after the performance for those guys to convince me and finally, Steve got his daughter on the phone, who said, you know, here are the four things that you need to think about.

Vinny 10:10

And if one of them, if you're having trouble speaking, then you need to go get it checked out right away. And she was adamant about it. And then it just I finally said, okay, and went with Steve to the UCLA which he I'm speaking of a different Steve now, but he stayed with me for a long time in the hospital and made sure I was set.

Vinny 10:48

They evaluated me right away, because he told him that he thought I had a stroke. And I said to him no way. I looked at him, I said, No way. And I told the doctor, no, there's no way I had a stroke. And so I spent a couple hours in the waiting room there at UCLA.

Vinny 11:11

Because of that the doctor evaluated me, and didn't think that, you know, it was possible that I had a stroke, he did some tests on me. And for whatever reason, I was able to disguise it pretty well. And anyway, finally, when they did the MRI on me, they got serious, and I got serious. And you know, it's been a hell of a journey ever since.

Vinny 11:44

I Imagine that. Where did you grow up? Where were you raised?

Vinny 11:50

I grew up in the Washington, DC area in Northern Virginia.

Vinny 11:58

And I don't know what life was like back then, or what kind of upbringing you had. But I'm going to pick up on a couple of things. You said you started crying like a little girl, it's interesting that you didn't say you started crying like a little boy. Because maybe, I don't know.

Bill 12:19

I related to that immediately. We're not disparaging anybody here, or we're not giving anyone a hard time. And it's not a problem to cry like a little girl. But it's interesting that we say that even because little boys are told not to cry, we're told not to be emotional, not to you know, tough it out, don't cry, you know, you'll be alright.

Bill 12:42

And it's interesting, we can't, even in our words, express it as I cried like a little boy, little girls are told to fight like a boy. Stop hitting like a girl, like, girls are told, stop hitting like a girl, you know, be a boy. And we're talking about crying. And we're comparing ourselves to girls.

Bill 13:05

It's a really bizarre part of our vocabulary and our conversation as humans, I just think it's strange. And of course, during stroke, nobody knows what's going on when their emotions kick in. But the way I described it was my head switched off. So something else did have to come back online. And it was my heart for the first time in 37 years, you know, came online, and it was bracing itself, you know.

Vinny 13:33

That's an interesting way to look at it. I can relate.

Bill 13:38

And it's picking up the slack where the head can't do much of the work anymore, like the heart's picking up the slack and going in, let me intervene here and let me support out or I'll help out. And let me express in a different way what's really going on for this person. You know, it's more than just a cognitive thing that we need to make sense of, this is an emotional thing as well.

Bill 14:05

You know, we are afraid, we're concerned for our family, our friends, ourselves, our future. We're all about that stuff. And that's the heart kicking in for me and going, you know, cry a little bit, man, I think you need to get this out and get it off your chest and show people what's going on inside. Not just because you look good on the outside. Pretend that everything is okay. That's kind of how I read into it.

Work vs Hospital

Vinny 14:30

Yeah you hit the nail on the head, I think. And, you know, I mean, plus, there was a little bit of fear that I knew that if I went to the hospital and went through the process of getting checked out, I probably wouldn't make the flight which was 24 hours from then the next day to Australia and I wouldn't be able to finished the tour.

Vinny 15:01

And I come from the mindset, you get up on stage and you perform at all cost, you know, and you know, my father taught me that and my brother was adamant about that too. And I remember playing when I had the you know, when I was 16 years old and could barely get on stage because, you know, I was sick and but the show must go on, as they say.

Vinny 15:39

You creative types of musicians and people in theater and all that kind of stuff. I mean, under no circumstances do they not want to perform. And that's interesting and strange, all at the same time. Because there's got to be an opportunity for people to go, you know, what I'm done, I don't want to do today, or I can't do today or I want to have a rest, you know, bring somebody else in.

Bill 16:05

It seems to be this. Under no circumstances do you not put the show on, and I feel that's such a real tough space to hang around in because mentally if somebody is doing a tough, you can see that might lead to, especially in rock bands, you know, substance abuse of every kind, you know?

Vinny 16:28

Yeah well, that world was definitely swimming all around. And, I knew enough to stay away from that, you know, my parents were really strong influence in that way. My dad was like, hey, you know, don't get involved in the things that will bring you down. And that is alcohol, drugs, and women, you know.

Vinny 17:01

He's like, and this was early on, you know, and he said, Look, these things will and I don't mean to say that women in general, but the idea of playing that field,

the way you see rock musicians and rock stars, you know, have a different girl every night. And he's like, don't get involved in that. That's not you, be a stronger person. And that stayed with me.

Vinny 17:36

When you finally convinced that you've had a stroke, and you need to spend some time in hospital. What was that like? How long did you spend in hospital?

Vinny 17:47

I spent three days of extensive tests because I had what they call a cryptogenic stroke. Meaning that they don't know what caused it. They have some theories and, you know, none of them really match up. COVID is even a theory. But the point is that they couldn't find a direct correlation to the type of stroke I had, and I had a stroke deep in the basal ganglia.

Vinny 18:29

So they ran every test and they were determined to find out what was, you know, going on, they tried this, they tried that. And literally, I have, you know, UCLA was absolutely great, and that they tried every angle they could think possible. And at the end of it, they said, we're gonna let you go and get you home.

Vinny 19:00

And when you get home, go see your doctor and proceed with the, you know, rehab therapy which was completely shut down. Because this was March 8, March 9. And you know, I am fortunate enough to have my father in law is a retired physician.

Vinny 19:38

So he was actually the first call that I made in the hospital before calling my wife and, he pretty much told me exactly what had happened and he advised me how to proceed, which is, you know, which was great.

Vinny 20:06

So anyway, I get home. I see my doctor at home, he has some theories they run some tests and they sent me to a neurologist at home. He also looked at everything that UCLA did and says, you know, we don't really know, we have some theories, we want you to see a cardiologist.

Vinny 20:34

So I saw the cardiologist, he did some additional studies on me, including a transesophageal echo where they look at your heart in detail. And he said he couldn't see anything there. And so, basically, we still don't know.

Vinny 21:01

So were you living your family living in DC?

Vinny 21:07

No, I am living in New York, I moved to New York about 23, 22 years ago, I moved just outside of New York City.

Vinny 21:19

That explains you're accent.

Vinny 21:21

To pursue the musical career, which is, you know, developed accordingly.

Vinny 21:31

Yeah, so the family is in New York City, and you're in California. So you're telling the family from California that I've fallen ill and I'm in hospital, and this is a situation, how did that go down?

Vinny 21:51

Not too well, because my wife was dealing with our kids. And you know, at the same time, COVID 19 is blowing up all around us. So normally, she would have jumped on a plane. You know, somebody would have been there, but she couldn't, she couldn't risk getting on a plane. And, you know, catching this horrific pandemic illness, and not being there for the kids.

Vinny 22:29

So I told her, don't worry, you know, stay at home and all kinds of things we're swimming around. And and we just did the most practical thing, which was my brother and my mother, live in Las Vegas. My brother immediately got in a car and drove to UCLA, which is in Los Angeles, he met me there at the hospital.

Vinny 23:02

And within I think it was 13 hours or so he was able to get to me and shortly thereafter, my mother and my sister came to the hospital as well. I went from Los Angeles, UCLA to back to Las Vegas with my brother, and stayed at my mother's

house for a couple of days. And till I was strong enough, and then my sister flew with me home to back to the New York City area.

Coming Home After The Stroke

Vinny 23:42

Wow. That's a serious effort from everybody to get you from this state that you're in back to home at some point. And then you're at home and what happens there? Are you settling back at home? How's the recovery coming along? What were you impacted by what were you left with?

Vinny 24:08

Well, mainly, it was, you know, I mean, my right side is impacted because I had the stroke on the left side. So there was some strength issues on my right side. But they were relatively minor. The big issues were my speech, which still you know, is not quite fluent.

Vinny 24:38

And mainly it affected my playing. Because for some reason it really set me back. As a matter of fact, I've, documented most of it. And this is kind of two months after I had the stroke. I went up on Instagram and started posting my recovery and efforts to recover.

Vinny 25:09

You know, because I heard that COVID was causing strokes. And I thought that, you know, posting this stuff would help somebody else, you know, it was mainly a chronological event. And that's the way I looked at it, I could help other people by posting this stuff.

Vinny 25:33

And, so as a result, pretty much two months into it, you can see me struggling to play exercises that I've played all my life and songs that I wrote, I couldn't play. And, you know. So then my wife took on the therapy role, because for a month, I couldn't get therapy, that everything was closed down.

Vinny 26:03

My wife looked up, you know, she tried every angle, got some advice from different people, and I was just doing what I could with her. All the while, playing everyday trying to get it back. And I got to say, after, 50 years with a guitar in my

hand. You know, I was just kind of getting to the point where I liked what I was playing.

Vinny 26:36

After 50 years of playing I felt like, you know, I could go into the studio, and play the type of solos that I wanted the way that I wanted to, and I could communicate well on the instrument. And then, you know, the stroke.

Vinny 26:58

Now you're gonna go one level deeper, my friend.

Vinny 27:02

It was a rude awakening, as they say.

Vinny 27:09

So when you say it's difficult to play, try and explain what that means. So what I did when I've always liked the ukulele, but I never played guitar or any instrument, I don't know a thing about music. And believe it or not, when I was in Fiji one year in 2005. And then when I was in Hawaii in 2013, both times I bought a ukulele, I don't know how to play it, or what to do with it, but I just bought one.

Bill 27:42

And I took one of them to, In 2015, I took one of them to a ukulele teacher to teach me how to play. And I figured I would use my effected hand, my left hand I'm not sure is it if I'm using my left hand to play the strings am I left handed or right handed?

Vinny 28:04

You would be right handed.

Bill 28:06

Okay. So I'm right handed using the left hand to strum or to hold the strings in notes. And I thought it would be a good idea to learn how to play and also retrain my hand which I have deficits on my left hand, you know, feeling deficits and movement deficits and coordination deficits.

Bill 28:28

It didn't last too long, because I think my teacher wasn't the best for me. And I wasn't understanding of what I needed to do. And I was really early in my

recovery. So there was a lot going on. And maybe it was a good idea, but it wasn't the right timing.

Bill 28:44

So I don't understand because I've never played before I don't understand what I was missing or what I wasn't doing well, or what's happening for you? Is it clear up here what your fingers need to do? Or is it an issue with your fingers? Or the fingers know what to do? But up here can't do it like what's happening?

Vinny 29:09

Well, I would say that it's a little of both more so on the right hand, than on the left, but I would say over the course of you know, since this happened, I have tried to analyze whether this is a cognitive thing, or whether it's a physical thing. And I've always, you know, run into as a musician, you run into hurdles constantly.

Vinny 29:38

You constantly get to the point where you can't do certain things, and you practice your way through them. And that's the way you approach everything, a piece of music, anything, you know, and I would say I had just done a record with a big band, where I played some of the most difficult music in my career.

Vinny 30:04

And vital information is an intense band where we play really difficult stuff. But that and I just approach it one step at a time to get to the point where I could play that as matter of fact, when I got the call for that gig. I don't know if you know him or not. But Frank Gambale used to play.

Vinny 30:31

He's Australian, which is why I asked you and Frank, and Balis is one of the greatest guitar players of all time. And I was asked to step into his shoes and listening to him on these records, to learn the music, I was on tour in Russia at the time, anyway, you just practice enough, you just practice way more than you should, so that when you perform, and things aren't right, you can still manage to get in, you know, and perform and get to that point.

Vinny 31:11

So I've always practiced my way out of situations or into situations. So but this was different, you know, the stroke is different. I would say that my therapists, all

of them, including physical, cognitive, and the occupational therapist were absolute rockstars, they tried every angle and didn't give up to the point, you know, that my insurance would cover it.

Vinny 31:47

Now, I tried everything, I mean, I'll give you a couple examples. I read one book that was talking about walking to a metronome. And of course, in music, we use a metronome. So I thought, what if I walk to a metronome, keep that tempo, my legs going at that tempo, and try to play a piece of music, or at least keep time rhythmically with my right hand, because that was the most that was, you know, extremely difficult for me.

Vinny 32:35

So I did things like that, you know, and started really, really slowly and worked up to the point where I could do it. And again, that's, you know, video of this is on Instagram, you can see me going through the process. And then my therapist came up with another idea where I was playing scales on the guitar, and could do them at the tempo that I could do it at.

Vinny 33:10

And then would pay attention to a lightboard and would have to manipulate the lightboard with my feet. So this is what's happening during improvised solos and jazz, in general, is multiple things are going on in the brain. So she would try to emulate that. And at some point, I had trouble holding a pick in my hand.

Vinny 33:46

And I still do, you know, it's gotten a lot better, but so we came up with this idea, I put the leather driving glove on. And in the leather glove, I put magnets in different places on my fingers. So that the glove had weights on it. So it was like resistance, and I could move that resistance around to fit my needs.

Vinny 34:18

And I practiced with that for two months at first people saw that on Instagram, they say, Vinny, you're gonna hurt yourself. Don't do that. And, you know, but it was just again, trying to practice through it. The concept of practicing through it.

Vinny 34:47

So you're 50 years of playing would have a lot of examples of when shit got real things got tough, and things intervened in your ability to be on stage plan stage to

be good at what you do to enjoy it. And this is very different, you've never experienced this before. But it's a challenge that you're faced with.

Bill 35:21

And you're going to have to try, at some point, you know, to push through and overcome, and the only place you can go back to have a reference point for when you did that was some other struggle in your life that you've been through it because you've been through, you know, 50 years of life or more, and this tough time.

Intro 35:44

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 now long will it take to recover? Will I actually recover? What things should I avoid? In case I make matters worse.

Intro 36:01

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 36:23

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.

Pushing Through Hard Times - Vinny Valentino



Vinny 36:46

Have you've found yourself reflecting on those really tough moments when you thought, Man, this is too hard. I can't do it anymore, or I don't want to do this anymore. And then you've pushed through have you found yourself doing that? Looking back?

Vinny 37:02

Yeah, you know, as a matter of fact, I am fortunate enough to have a lot of documentation from you know, the early years and in lots of video and lots of audio, lots of records that I've been on that I've done myself, that I listened to. And I just, you know, at first it was kind of difficult to listen to those things. And I still look at video and go, Wow.

Vinny 37:45

And, but now I've gotten to the point where I am performing again. And I'm comfortable. I am my as a good friend of mine says I am authentic with the way I am. And, I've gotten myself to the point where I feel comfortable. And what I can present as a musician is still has value, it hasn't gotten back to the way that I was before. But it may never get back there. I'm okay with that. But I don't want to lose the improvisational aspect of what I spent years to develop.

Vinny 38:42

I love that I love that you're comfortable playing with the imperfections in your music now that you actually have almost for right now no choice to live with and play with. Because I imagine that musicians are really anal and want to make it perfect every single time.

Bill 39:03

And now you can't and now it's either, you know, play the way I can or don't play at all. And it's like, why would you not play at all, when it gives so much joy to you and other people. That's this is the other way you got to let go of certain things really, you know, you got to pick up affection, you got to let play of this beautiful thing that you were doing just before the stroke.

Bill 39:29

And you just got to play within your new parameters. And that's what people don't realize about how to live life after stroke. They don't realize that they've got new parameters set by external forces got nothing to do with us. But if we live within those parameters, we can sometimes, you know, skirt around the edges of them, but we can actually still live a pretty full life within the new parameters that we've been set right and that's how music is you know I remember, and I've got no idea who this was, and I can't credit anyone for it.

Bill 40:05

So I don't know who it is there was this artist who did some really fine detailed work with pencils. And they would draw these sketches and it would be in immaculate looking pencil drawing of a landscape or whatever it was a person. And because there was so much detail, they would spend a lot of time focusing, and practicing to be extremely still and do these really minor micro movements, you know, just take it to the next level, we're talking about perfection to the next level, like and you couldn't even imagine it.

Bill 40:42

And then unfortunately, this artist, what happened was they they started to get a tremor in their hand in the drawing hand. So you can imagine now that the whole idea of what their life had evolved to become, to be this person who creates these immaculate images by penciling these micro lines that you can hardly see into a spot to create this perfect image now is not possible.

Bill 41:13

And remember listening to that, and, or reading that and not you know, being in a situation where I could reach out to this person, let them know, but I wondered if at all, they ever considered the possibility that what if now, they just embrace the tremor, livid their work with this new level of I don't know what you know, like, but from the point of view of an evolution of an artist from this perfection thing to

this other version of perfection that includes a tremor.

Bill 41:53

And I reckon it would have made for such a compelling story. And the value of that art would have been just as much valuable or more, because of what it's saying and what it's describing, and, you know, how it shows that humans transition from one stage of life to this other stage. That's kind of my take on it.

Vinny 42:21

Yeah, I would say that, it's very difficult, because potentially, just like with me, there's documentation of what you had done and the concept is, you've, you can see what you have done. And that represents, it's almost like two people because now the artist with the tremor, you know, could be as valid as the artist without the the tremor, but it's a different person, you know, it's, well, not necessarily a different person, it's just, uh, you see what I'm saying.

Vinny 43:03

Your identity has shifted, and you need to kind of upgrade and get to that stage and move to that stage, start changing your thinking, your feeling everything around that I get it, right. The thing about about it is, is, you know, for lack of a better way to describe this and don't take this the wrong way. Like, say somebody or you thought you were a ship musician now.

Bill 43:29

That would be a travesty, all of your ideas for how to be a true musician, like developed over the last 15 years, you have all of that still. And you just have this new method by which you strum the guitar or you pick the string or you hold the neck and that's like, the information about how to put music together and write that and create that and deliver it doesn't go away because your hands won't strum, the way that it used to strum perhaps this is a new identity to shift into and to move into and sort of create this space of what can I do with this new gift that I have and use the old information to enhance this new gift, you know, to take it to the next level?

Vinny 44:28

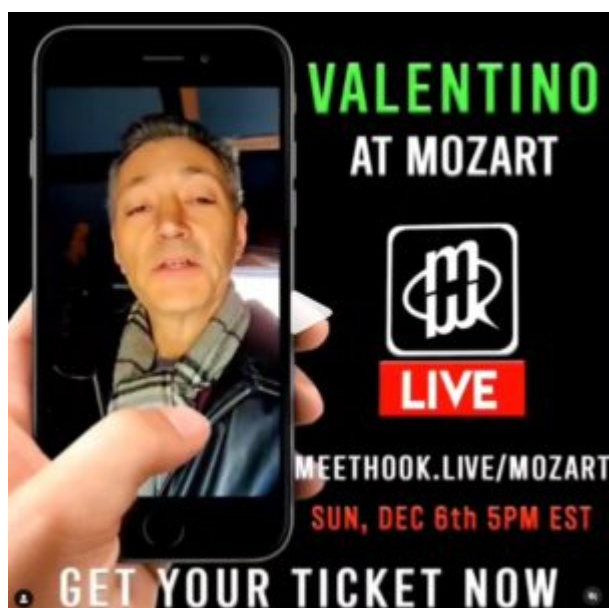
Yeah, I like that. And, you know, we're our own worst enemies. Because with me, you know, I've got all of course, all kinds of things swirling around in my head, but I would get together I would force myself to get together with some of the

greatest guitar players in the world from all over the world on a zoom during the pandemic because we weren't working.

Vinny 45:00

So we could have a laugh and it's amazing that every one of them have gone through some type of struggle that is made them what they are. And none of those guys took the approach of, you know, I'm not going to do it anymore. They persevered through it. And they never thought of me, as you know, because there comes a point where you you realize it anyway, it's, um, I'm beyond that now.

Don't Take No For An Answer - Vinny Valentino



Vinny 45:42

But at some point, you have so much anger, or at least, I did, and this has been taken away, that you just don't want to continue, you know, maybe I'll, I'll go on and do something else. I'll be a plumber or whatever. It crossed my mind, you know, but these guys, but the musicians that I've been surrounded by, didn't take no for an answer.

Vinny 46:12

They were like, you know, a bass player that I play with weekly since the beginning. You know, he's like, look, you know, you're, I've seen the development, I've seen you get better. And this pianist and, you know, all these musicians are giving me the feedback. Like, it's just a bump in the road, you got to get through it. Don't look at it, like anything beyond that.

Vinny 46:40

Yeah. The, audience is so forgiving. They wouldn't care if you missed the stream or a note or whatever, would they I mean, they're just there to see Vinny Valentino play and the rest of the band, and they're like, man, I'm seeing them play. And if they fail to hit every note, it's like, Whoa, that's a relief. You know, like, I don't have to be that good.

Bill 47:03

You know, I don't have to worry about me missing a string, or a note. And it's like, if we could be our greatest fan instead of our greatest critic? Then we'd have a better experience in a shitty time, you know?

Vinny 47:23

Yeah. You're so right.

Bill 47:30

That's what I get like, when I'm hard on myself, man. Nothing works. When I just let go and just let everything happen. You know, things work. I'm writing a book, I haven't written for a month Vinny, it's on my mind every day. But in the space that I've been in for the last month, there's no way that I can sit and write anything and make it legible, and make it the way that I want it to be.

Bill 47:49

So I'm not going to do it at that time. You know, I have to be in the right. Headspace. And, at one point, I was a bit harsh on myself at the beginning, you know, when I wondered whether I'll get my brain back when I took it for granted when it was that good. And I took it for granted and did stupid things instead of smart things.

Bill 48:10

And then when I wondered, Am I ever going to get my brain back, I was like, I might not get it back. Like I might, it might not be the way that it always was. And I'm going to have to live with not making the most of it until the age of 37. And now I'm going to do this new version of it.

Bill 48:28

And you know, I'm not sure I'm not sure what's going to happen. And now my brain is back and I'm healed, but it's not the same. And it needs me to rest at different stages. And by the mid afternoon, I'm pretty much done if it's anything

to do with cognitive stuff, and you know, computer work and all that type of thing.

Bill 48:52

So I've got to make the most of the mornings if I wake up at five o'clock in the morning or 5:30 and I can't get back to bed, I'm better off getting out of bed, doing two or three hours of stuff that I need to get done before 8 or 9 o'clock and then feeling really accomplished. Like I've done a whole heap of things and then is into the rest of my day and go oh, okay, it's two o'clock, I'm done for the day.

Bill 48:52

I can't do any more. I'm not doing any more. And then I just ease into my night you know, so that's the the parameters I was talking about before the parameters have changed. I can't get those ones back. I'm gonna work within these ones. And that's served me pretty well, but it's not easy. I'm not saying that, you know, it's just going to help.

Vinny 49:43

Yeah. And I'm sure you're like me. I've watched you know, Ted Talks and listened to podcasts and listened to neuro neurologist about this and neuroscientists about this and one thing that I read this actually before the stroke, that we don't get enough sleep in general, as humans, and especially on the east coast of the United States, we, you know, we just don't get enough sleep.

Vinny 50:26

And where the industry standard used to be eight hours, we dream about eight hours, this neuroscientist is saying No, we actually do better with something like nine hours of sleep. Well, if you can get nine hours of sleep and have a working life with family, all more power to you. But I have tried to position myself and change around that concept that you know, and sleep is no longer optional.

Importance Of Sleep In Stroke Recovery

Vinny 51:11

And I know that musicians don't sleep when everyone else sleeps. And that makes sense, right? Sleep is it's like a, it's the best thing you could do. Like literally, along with nutrition and sleep, you get those two things, just, if you get an 80%, right, you're doing so much better.

Bill 51:36

Because at night when you sleep, it's when the brain actually shrinks in size, to allow Cerebro spinal fluid through all the cells to wash it out and clean it up and detoxify it, get rid of all that stuff. And then what that does is create healing, and that creates new neurons and new memories and new pathways and allows them to solidify and become permanent in your brain, right.

Bill 52:07

And if you're trying to do problem solving on a couple of bad night's sleep, you're going to do less problem solving, and a bad night's sleep. And when you're in the middle of stroke recovery, and all you have to do is solve problems. You need to have clarity of mind.

Bill 52:26

And you need to not be impacting on the negative aspects of the stroke that you're causing, or your you know, interfering with your recovery by not sleeping and not eating appropriately. So if you can pick up sleep anywhere at any time of the day, it's really, really important.

Bill 52:44

I was doing my little catnaps at midday, and I was doing early night sleeping, even if I go to bed and don't sleep, I just have a really dim light on. And I might listen to a meditation or a podcast or something in the background. And then that lying down even though it's not sleeping really starts to sort of help settle me into a decent night's sleep and meditation before bed. And night meditation before bed really does help to calm you and put you into a good rhythm. And you know about Binaural beats?

Vinny 53:27

Yeah I do know a little bit about that I have tried that too. What I find is, at least for me, that I'm paying too much attention to the beats into the musical aspects of them. And my brain won't shut off with that what I actually found useful is actually is listening to comedians. Just listen to comedians go on, and that will put me to sleep believe it or not, I mean, you know, I'll get a chuckle in here there and eventually, I'll be relaxed enough to fall asleep.

Vinny 54:14

Well, that makes sense that you would be paying attention to the music and to the way that that's been produced or structure or put together makes complete sense

it would be stimulating you instead of putting you to sleep.

Vinny 54:27

Exactly. Yeah, because that was that was you know, recommended to me by by a few people and and I immediately you know, put that to use and I'm like wait I feel more awake now than I did before and and you know after an hour of listening to that stuff I realized that I was analyzing tempos and beats and even when I'm listening to music cuz really what I like to do is go to bed listening to Keith Jarrett or George Benson or somebody that, you know, some inspiration West Montgomery and in those I find myself No, because I'm paying way too much attention to what they're doing and how am I going to do that the next day? You know?

Vinny 55:26

Yeah, yeah, I get it. It's not chilling you out, it's getting you all energized. Yeah, I get it. So if you're a musician, and you're away from home a lot, the family is on the other side of the country or you're on the other side of the planet? How often were you were away? And what sort of amount of time would you spend away from home?

Vinny 55:54

Well, 2020 looked to be a very busy year, in 2019 was too but I usually don't go away for more than three weeks at a time. But there was a lot of touring that just lined up, you know, when you're out, you want to try to line up as much as you can, because that's when you obviously, when promoters can string together dates, you can make the most money that way, they don't have to bring you out on this flight and that flight and hotels and etc.

Vinny 56:30

So it makes the most sense. But I limit my activity to this one band, actually, to Steve Smith, and a project two projects that that he's involved in one of them is vital information. And the other one is the Oregon Trio project that we started. And those two bands tour about three weeks a year, sometimes more, you know, there might be some touring in during the festival season.

Vinny 57:14

I've done that with the Oregon trio. But usually I'm not I'm not gone that much. It's not like, it's I've purposely turned down those those types of gigs that would

keep me out 150-200 days a year. I've, you know, now there's, monetary things that play into it as well. But I but but I feel strongly that my family comes first.

Vinny 57:48

Yeah. So, how old are the kids?

Vinny 57:56

I've got a range from 9 to 19.

Vinny 58:01

And how do they cope seeing Dad not himself?

Vinny 58:07

You know, the young ones seem to be okay with it. Although, you know, and I don't know if this is true, but I continue to play chess with my 13 year old and I taught him to play at an age where I could pretty much beat them regularly, or at least upper hand, I'd make a mistake every once in a while he'd win every once in a while, but now and since the stroke. It's convenient to blame it on the stroke.

Vinny 58:46

I haven't. I can't hold a candle to him. Unless he makes a you know, unless he blunders. There's no way I can hold a candle to his capabilities. And you know, in his defense, he's really studying the game. He studies it like I studied the guitar. He you know, plays it for hours every day.

Vinny 59:13

So you can't keep up with somebody at that level. Even though he is quite a bit younger. But my other two are older. So I think they've you know, come to accept it and seen the progress that I've made. And just see it as a bump in the road.

Vinny 59:48

You've got to be a good example to kids to show them that when the shit hits the fan for them at some point in their life, hopefully a really, really long way down the journey that I've got an example for how you go about recovering and overcoming shit, and persevering and pushing through whatever life throws at you, you know, that's, I think what I'm learning is, that's my role more than anything to my kids.

Bill 1:00:15

Now, especially that they're 25 and 21, you know, it's not really about anything else, it's just about showing them being kind of like, a clairvoyant for them, and showing them the future, right, like, Guys, this is where you're going to get at some point. And there's one way to go about overcoming that or battling through it, or being better than, than you were before, you know.

Bill 1:00:42

With a 13 year old, I love the Dad move, you know, teach him how to play but not too much so that I could beat him, and just let him know who's boss, you know, just a, you know, I taught you on the boss. But it's an interesting how the mentor has been handed over. And now, you know, he's fascinated by it and studying it to that point where he's getting better and better at it.

The Best Patient - Vinny Valentino

Bill 1:01:12

And you're sort of dealing with stroke and other things. But at the same time, you know, it's time the master has to kind of bow down and you know, except the apprentice is up and coming, you know. But what's really interesting about what you do, Vinny is, you're doing a lot of things that a neurologist would love, like you would be the neurologist's best patient, because everything you do is challenging to the brain in a lot of different ways.

Vinny 1:03:51

Yeah, absolutely. And, my therapist used to joke about this, but, you know, I took a very systematic approach to therapy and recovery, because that's the way I learned from my father and you know, that that's the way to deal with things. My teachers, you know, my first real guitar teacher was when I was 16 years old, and he taught me take a systematic approach to it step by step, slowly first, before you speed things up, and you will get there.

Vinny 1:04:42

It's just a matter of time. And, you know, back then we think, Oh, we've got all the time in the world. It's a little different now but it's the same practice and same concept. One of the things that I did, as part of getting myself back together was develop an app for guitar players, called the super seven minute guitar workout.

Vinny 1:05:16

And it's available on, you know, Google and Android devices and Apple devices. But it's a documentation with beginning with a really simple exercise to more advanced stuff. And doing that, over a period of seven minutes, every day, you will have results, no matter the tempo, it's not about playing it fast. It's about playing it accurately.

Vinny 1:05:52

And so I put together this concept, and it went along with my therapy. And my, you know, my therapists were like, wow, you're actually yeah, and, you know, I was doing the videos, while I was doing therapy, and, you know, it was all part of the therapy, I looked at it as part of the therapy and part of the way it was gonna come back.

Vinny 1:06:24

And now we have a, you know, an app that's available to the world that doesn't matter the level, you can, get something out of it. And it's like the seven minute workout, that concept of interval training for athletes or for anybody that wants to work out that concept on the guitar.

Vinny 1:06:50

So you know, what I love about it is, every time you've said something, I've done a Google search, I've looked at it or looked it up. What I love about it is it's your way of doing therapy. That's what I like about it. So often we go into the therapists, rooms, and we do their version of therapy.

Bill 1:07:12

And, you know, that's kind of not enough for some people, because, you can't relate to it, or you don't enjoy it, you're not going to do it, I'm never going to do guitar therapy, Vinny, you know, there's no chance. But if I was asked for what I wanted to do in therapy, that would really make a big difference, you know, and one of the things that I did when I was learning to coordinate my left hand and move it properly, was I played on the Wii on the Nintendo Wii, I played tennis, you know, and you hold the Wii controller and you play tennis, and I've never played tennis before.

Bill 1:07:49

But, you know, the ball's that actually coming to you so it doesn't feel that dangerous, you know, and you don't have to run far. So I was doing the whole

tennis striking this ball, this pretend bowl in VR. And it was really useful. There was working, I was working up a sweat, but I wasn't at risk of falling and hurting myself and doing anything that was going to be detrimental to me.

Bill 1:08:14

So it was enjoyable. And I didn't realize that that was going to be part of therapy, but they asked me, you know, what kind of therapy would you like these are options that we have available, and then I chose the ones that I was going to relate to. And I just love how you've gone about this.

Bill 1:08:32

It's related to the thing that you're really good at the thing you've done your whole life, the thing you're passionate about. And that's going to motivate somebody to heal and recover better than me telling you to come and do therapy my way you're going to say, well, you know, that's good for you, man, but it's not for me.

Vinny 1:08:53

Well, you know, one of the things that I learned from listening to your podcast, that is that every stroke is different. It's like trying to put humans into, you know, into a mold, you can't do it, everyone is different. Every stroke is different too there might be some similarities in the difficulties that we have to do.

Vinny 1:09:24

But you know, I can recall certain, you know, podcasts and certain people. The guy that was the bartender that ended up on stage and the girl that lives in Las Vegas that was you know, high up in this corporate world, I can recall the things that they said and you know, make that a part of what is good for me what can I take away from it? And that's that's the whole whole reason that I posted my progress on Instagram. And I have to say that I've been lacking in the past few months. But I'll start getting back out there and posting again.

Vinny 1:10:24

Yeah, I get really prolific at some point as well, you know, I put a lot of stuff out, and then I can't, and I just don't, and you see the downloads, they go down and all that kind of stuff goes down and it changes and it's like, well, you know, whatever, I can't push this all day, every day, I run out of energy, and I'm not doing it for the purpose of having it out there for everybody all the time.

Bill 1:10:49

I'm doing it for me partly and for them as well. And if I've got to look after my health, I've got to look after my health, whether it's my mental health, or my physical health, or my emotional health. I'm doing their first I'm not looking after you. Before I'm looking after me, you know, I've got a lot as well. And that's important, you know.

Bill 1:11:10

Mike Shutt who was on episode 161. He was a classic, do everything for everybody else kind of guy, you know. And at some point, he said, Well, you know, I can't do that anymore. I've got to look after myself. And he went back to his roots and what he loves, which was theater, and he did a one man show.

Bill 1:11:35

That podcast is just amazing, man. It's so well produced, you know, the sound effects like everything about I imagine I'm listening to it. And I'm like, I'm actually there. But I didn't feel the difference between listening to it and being in a crowd. And then Christina DeVille, she's just a workaholic, she just works all day, every day, Episode 160.

Bill 1:12:00

And she's really good at what she does. But what that did was that alienated her from other aspects of life, you know. And she started to find balance now in work, and in her personal life. And what's really cool is her work is pushing her back is pushing her away and saying to her enough, stop, you know, do less, or we've got this covered or you don't need to worry about that.

Bill 1:12:30

Or, you know, they're really picking up the slack for her and they're supporting her in that way. And she doesn't know what to do with that. She's like what do you mean? You know, I used to be able to do this. And I used to be able to perform at this level similar to you hers, it's a performance, it's still work.

Bill 1:12:52

It's work, but it's a performance, she's performing for somebody, whether it's herself or her boss, or her employees, or the clients. She's doing what you you're doing. She's traveling the state. So she's traveling the country. And she's performing for somebody, and now she's got to perform in these new parameters

that have been set for her.

Bill 1:13:17

And everyone's finding their way, man, no one has done this before, so they don't know what the hell they're doing. And they're just finding their feet again, and they're re-learning everything. And they're going to get and they're going to get there. But it's it's just brand new. And you know, you're early on in the process, and I'm nearly 10 years February, it will be 10 years in my process. Then it gets easier.

Vinny 1:13:45

That's amazing. 10 years out.

It Get's Easier



Bill 1:13:47

Yeah, like that. And it just flew. It gets easier. It's still hard but it gets easier. Do you know what I mean? Like it's not simple and sometimes I don't like waking up and not being able to feel my foot and sometimes I don't enjoy that my balance is affected and sometimes I don't enjoy that I can stay up late late at night to go and see a show or to do that kind of stuff. But that's only sometimes a lot of the times I'm alright with most of it even though it's not always ideal, you know?

Vinny 1:14:27

Yeah. It's the authentic you.

Vinny 1:14:35

Yeah, I don't talk shit now. That's that nobody gets the I'll push through. Yeah, I'll be right or yeah all right. Let's do that. They don't get that anymore. They just get what has to happen is dude, I'm out. That's it. Catch you later. Enjoy your night. That's refreshing in a way. Maybe that would have come to me with time as well and age more age.

Bill 1:15:00

But there was still an amount of what's the word? Maybe it's pressure or peer pressure, or whatever it was to do stuff for people, you know. And it comes from my training or the property maintenance business. So, it comes from my training of always making things happen for my clients, whoever said they needed something done or was always yes. You know, but now, I'm at that point where? Yes, for them means no for me somewhere, and I don't like that. I don't like that.

Vinny 1:15:35

Yeah. Do you find that in doing these podcasts? I mean, I have to imagine that you learned so much just, you've done 164, I think are more 165.

Bill 1:15:54

165 that are live. And I've got three in the can. So there's about 168 or 169. At the moment.

Vinny 1:16:04

Yeah. And I just listened to the cardiologist that you had on. As a matter of fact, I bought his book, he is very interesting, but I can imagine through the process, has the process of this podcast, has helped you in a way that not only interviewing the individual or the people that have had these incidents, but also being able to tell your story and how it's come, you know, what you've done at this point in your journey?

Bill 1:16:54

Yeah, my upbringing was really cool. In the ideal upbringing, no dramas, in life, everything was pretty much perfect. You know, my parents are amazing. You know, they come from a Greek background, and their ideas are a little bit still 1960s Greece, you know, but they had a different role to fulfill in life, which was, you know, to raise their family, they were raising their family after the war.

Bill 1:17:25

So they needed to, and they were born after the war. So they needed to have this

mindset that their parents, you know, gave them which was about, you know, keep your family close, you know, work hard, save your money, and that kind of stuff. And that didn't really fit me. It didn't really work for me, it was great in ideally, but I always wanted more. I always tried to strive. And I always felt like I had a lot to say, and nobody would listen.

Bill 1:17:56

And I always had the wrong audience, I suppose. And it really frustrated me as a kid, I felt like nobody understood me, I felt like a, you know, like the black sheep in the family. Like, I had no idea where I fit in and what my role was in the world. And I did stuff that my dad made me do not that he forced me. But you know, that they trained me to do, which was work a shitty job and work for a long time and all that kind of stuff.

Bill 1:18:30

And I had a creative outlet. And I had the gift of the gab, you know. And I had nothing to do with it. Because I didn't feel like I had a compelling story or anything worth sharing that was relevant or important. And then what I got curious about was, how to progress, my recovery and how to take responsibility for certain things, because I always appreciated taking responsibility for my situation, whatever it was, even though if I had caused it, and I didn't know what I was doing.

Bill 1:19:07

If somebody pointed out to me, I never got offended when somebody said you're doing a shit job of something. I always thought, oh, okay, why am I doing a shit job? What is he seeing that I'm not? So when I started to learn about how to help myself and recover better, I started sharing it with people and found myself like, I've got a lot of good information you should know this.

Bill 1:19:33

You're a stroke survivor, let me tell you this, you need to hear about it. But it fell on deaf ears at the beginning because I chose the wrong audience. Again, the wrong people weren't interested to hear. And I made some enemies. People disliked me for sharing stuff that I've learned that helped me and my recovery.

Bill 1:19:50

They hated me for that. And I was like, Well, I've misjudged this. I didn't know

how but I misjudged it. So then I thought stuff and I'll just keep learning and I'll find something to do with it at some point. And I started, I was always doing coaching of people. So in my property maintenance business, I've been coaching people beneath, coming up in the ranks to overcome certain things and be a certain way and learn some things about business. Not that I was an expert at it, or you know, mega successful at it financially, but I was always really doing this.

Bill 1:20:29

And then the coaching idea, somebody put that into my head, you could coach stroke survivors to, you know, help them recover from stroke. And I thought, well, that's a great idea. I wonder if that's possible.

Bill 1:20:44

And because I didn't know what to do with any of this new information, I thought, look, I'm just going to create a podcast, I actually thought of that in the hospital being wheeled to therapy, which was a bizarre time I spoke about it with Dr. Bradford Burke, as well, like I spoke to him about it, because he thought of writing his book, day two of his injury.

Bill 1:21:05

And it's like, what the hell man like, surely there's other things to focus on not how to write a book about your journey that's just started in this most dramatic way, you know. So the podcast in 2015 was just me interviewing other people who had overcome adversity so that I could understand how they did it, so that maybe I could learn from them.

Bill 1:21:31

And that was really helpful. But it wasn't hitting an audience. It wasn't finding an audience. And I don't know two years down the track after about 20 episodes, somebody said to me, it should be about stroke. And then it really sunk in it occurred to me that yeah, it should be about stroke.

Bill 1:21:48

And let me re-brand it and change it. And I started interviewing stroke survivors, and they were confirming in me what I thought about stroke, stroke recovery, we spoke about the emotional challenges that the challenges that our relationships face, then our kids and our parents, like, I started to not feel alone, for the first time in my life was like, Well, you guys get me like, here's a group of people that

get me.

Bill 1:22:20

And, of course, the stroke wasn't really the conversation. This is real life stuff that we're talking about. And stroke is just the thread that brings us together. And it's like, Well, okay, what I'm finding is people who are like minded, who happened to have a stroke as well. And now, that's a really compelling story.

Funcional Neurology



Bill 1:22:45

That's a really interesting thing for me to do. And what's really cool, the interview I did just before this, which is out now is with a lady who's a functional neurologist, or she does functional neurology, I can remember exactly what the words are. But if you're listening to this episode, it's the one just before so go and have a look at it. If you haven't heard that yet.

Bill 1:23:13

And we had a really deep dive into the global aspect of the recovery in that it's not just a head that you better look at for the recovery. It's not just, oh, that person isn't speaking, what else is going on in the system that might be interfering with that speech?

Bill 1:23:35

And that's why I asked you like, is it the fingers not playing the chord? Or is it the brain not knowing how to tell the fingers to play the chord? Or is it something

else? So what I've been able to do is really do a real deep dive into the complexity of stroke recovery. And I don't know much about it yet, because there's no way that I could ever know everything about it.

Bill 1:24:02

But what I do know informs really great conversations and brings people into a space of thinking that is beyond you had a stroke, go home, do these exercises, and enjoy your life. You know, yeah, I'm way beyond that. And, and one of the things that we picked on it and touched on even in the episode before this is about hand eye coordination and movement after a stroke.

Bill 1:24:32

And I'll talk about it again is a spoke about a guy called Ivan who was in therapy with me, who I call dive in, it's not his real name. And he had to pick up a toilet roll that was empty. And he had to hold it like that with his affected hand, get the clench it and then move it to the other side of the table to the other side of his body, put it down and not drop it.

Bill 1:24:57

But while he was doing that, He was calling his hand a bastard, because it wouldn't do what he wanted, right. And he was losing his shit at his hand, calling it a bastard. And of course, the more he did that, the less he was able to complete the task, pick up the toilet roll, place it down and make sure he didn't drop it.

Bill 1:25:23

So then, as a coach of other people in other parts of my life, I said to him, well, if your hand did what you wanted it to do, and it moved, what would it be, he said it would be my friend. I said to him cool. Do that, call your hand your friend at the beginning of the exercise and just see what happens if anything changes. I don't know, maybe nothing will but let's see, he goes all right.

Bill 1:25:51

So he looks at his hand. He goes come on, friend. It was no longer than 60 seconds, Vinny he picks up the damn toilet roll. He moves it to the other side of his body, he puts it upright, and he lets it go it was like nuts. Like everyone went nuts. That six of us around this table watching him do that. I think the PTs and the OTS missed the significance of what had just happened.

Vinny 1:26:20

Exactly.

Bill 1:26:25

Because they're on another sort of level, rather than thinking about things. And this guy, I don't know if that lesson stayed in his brain for the next few months or weeks or years of rehab, because I never got to be with him for much longer than about four weeks. But that is where my understanding of stroke recovery has got to like that level of nuance where, dude, that word, just the word that you chose, made you breathe differently it made your blood flow differently, it made oxygen travel through your body differently.

Bill 1:27:07

It loosened your muscles, it changed your posture, it changed the chemicals in your brain, it changed the chemicals in your butt, your legs, your knees, your arms, your fingers, it did all of that just that one word. And I delivered this presentation I call it words are like weapons, they wound sometimes.

Bill 1:27:31

That lesson has enabled me to also understand that how my words, which often I get wrong in the wrong context, the wrong people, I used the wrong word. And I pissed them off. And I annoyed them and I wound them. So I'm very cognitive on that. I'm very conscious now that words are like weapons, and they weren't sometimes, you know, it's what sure says in our amazing song. If I could turn back time, you know?

Vinny 1:28:01

Yeah.

Bill 1:28:01

And it's like there's a lesson that can travel across my entire life. One word has a massive impact on both physical, emotional and mental outputs. And if I use the wrong word in the wrong instance, I wound so for me, I try not to do that to myself. And I try not to do to other people.

Bill 1:28:29

And when I stepped up and do that to other people and said the wrong shit, apologize. I apologize more than I've ever apologized. But now I know why I'm apologizing. Now, I'm not just doing the whole sorry, man. I'm actually properly apologizing.

Vinny 1:28:44

Yeah, yeah, I, you know, I have continued well, all of my students, you know, have been gracious enough to continue their lessons with me. You know, I've always taught my whole life and I didn't know at the point that I came back from the West Coast. I didn't know what I had to offer them.

Vinny 1:29:12

I really didn't know what I had to offer them. But they were adamant about continuing to work with me and I teach a groove class, a class that is all about learning how to make people have have fun with music. It's about grooving. It's not about chops, it's not about, you know, dexterity technique or whatever. It's about grooving and that's it.

Vinny 1:29:44

And that class, wouldn't let me take a week off. They said no, come on Vinny we're with you. We're doing this together. Come on, in and that teaching aspect has in with all my students, it's it's just been a big part of my, the therapy, you know, and I think that is the same for you, when you, I mean, just that alone, just that one lesson that you described, with the the roll of toilet paper that can go so far for anybody, it doesn't matter if you've had a stroke or not.

Vinny 1:29:44

And I can, I can picture myself, in my practice room, my studio here, with my guitars all around me, just cursing like you wouldn't believe, trying to get this passage out, even before the stroke, but now, even more so you know, I'm like, You can't imagine the curse words that come out of me just, you know, trying to make them.

Vinny 1:29:44

Matter of fact, I'm writing my anthem, it'll be called stroke of genius. And that's the concept of it, you know, the concept is that we take the words, they affect us, and they affect the people that we say them to. And when we own that, that's when it that's when it gets real. That's when it that's when we, we can put it into practice.

Bill 1:31:30

But it's about owning it. Because look, I come on here, and people put me on a pedestal, they think I'm an expert in something, I don't know shit from clay about

anything, let's be honest. But all I know is that I'm putting into practice, what I've learned and that's all I'm just trying to practice and get better at my daily existence and my life in every aspect.

Bill 1:31:59

And I'm very aware of when I'm not being better by No, because it doesn't feel right everywhere. And I can't convince myself like I used to in the past, that I you know, that's irrelevant, or that doesn't matter, I can't do that anymore. I can't lie to myself, my body knows. And it gives me feedback, and I cannot not pay attention to it, I have to pay attention to it.

Bill 1:32:23

So I share this wisdom and the wisdom of my guest in the hope that it's going to trigger something for somebody else down the track, and they'll remember it when it's necessary. And together, these conversations, this practice that I'm doing. It's a practice of conversation. It's a philosophy.

Bill 1:32:45

And, I'm reading books on philosophy, and I'm just trying to understand what they were about. And all they were about was just a question everything. And that's all I'm doing. I'm just questioning everything and trying to, you know, not lose my temper. And when I do, I just questioned why I did. I'm not getting giving myself a hard time about it.

Bill 1:33:06

And I apologize to myself as much as I apologize to my kids and my wife and the people who I gave a hard time to. And I try and make arguments last less, not as long as they used to. And you know how they sometimes going to the next day and the next day, I try not to do that anymore. I try to bring them down to that just the one hour of the argument and move on.

Bill 1:33:28

But I'm not an expert at it. I get it wrong a lot. And sometimes, if the other person said something that's wounded me, well, now I'm learning how to overcome those wounds quicker? If I can, you know, but I'm not perfect that if I had a bad night's sleep or, you know, had a really tough day or whatever.

Bill 1:33:48

I'm human, I'm the same as I always was. But I'm using what the stroke did to me

as an opportunity to learn more about life. Because I can't be as stupid as I was before the stroke, because that led to stroke that led to disease, and I don't want to be that stupid anymore. I want to be a bit smarter than that.

Vinny 1:34:14

Yeah. You know, my grandfather used to tell us that doctors are practicing medicine, when you see their business card, it will say practicing medicine in some way, shape, or form, at least it did back in the you know, when he was coming up. And when he was learning so I always thought there was a parallel between musicians and doctors.

Vinny 1:34:45

There was you know, this idea that it's a constant practice. We'll never get to the point where we've achieved you know, this idea of being a genius. No, we're it's a path, it's a, it's a journey. And it's about enjoying that journey. And in that practice, I laugh when I hear musicians tell me that they hate practicing, because there's a lot of them that are great musicians that have said that.

Vinny 1:35:21

Because, you know, first of all, I point out to them, that's not really true. Because when I send you a piece of music, and you come to the gig, extremely prepared, and play it better than I ever could have imagined it'd be played, you have practiced it, even though you say you haven't. And, well, that's different. They say, you know, but it isn't different. And, I think that idea of everybody is just practicing in the acceptance of that, you know, is really what we have to learn.

Medicine Lost Its Way

Bill 1:36:05

I feel that medicines lost its way a little bit. And I love what you said because now the business card has all their accomplishments at university. Dude, like, I don't give a shit about all the university accomplishments, I want to know how you applied what you learned into your daily life. Not just in your office, in every aspect of your daily life, you know?

Bill 1:36:33

If you're coming to work shitty, because you just had an argument with your wife, and you're about to open my head up and do surgery on it, I want to know that

that argument with your wife is not going to impact that surgery. That's what I want to know, like, this is a practice and you're telling me about all the letters at the end of your name, because of the qualifications that you've achieved, you know.

Bill 1:36:54

That don't mean anything, unless you're able to show that you've grown and developed as a human being, while obtaining all of these letters at the end of your name. And seeing all the people that you've seen and done all the things that you've said, you've done.

Bill 1:37:11

Whereas, you know, musicians are still musicians, they roll, they do what they've always done, they practice, they get up on stage, they perform, and they give their heart and soul in some way, shape, or form. And their words are always an expression of what's happening inside of them, whether it's in their emotions, or their head, or their gut, or wherever it is, that's what we get to see and hear.

Bill 1:37:35

The visual sounds from Metallica, you know, to a classical piece to whatever that we hear the internal goings on of that musician who wrote that, that lyric and who performed that song, you know, so I think that medicine has lost its way a little bit and Dr. Bradford Burke, he was a great example of medicine, actually starting to re-find, like, what's important about, the work that they do, he's writing a book, which I wish he had never had the opportunity to write because that meant that he wouldn't be in the situation that he's in.

Bill 1:38:25

But the fact that he's in it, and decided to write a book about it to help himself and help other people, and now he's learning from life, and is applying the life learning to his clients and to his patients. That's a man that's a doctor that I want to be involved with, you know, the the guy before that year is a really good doctor.

Bill 1:38:47

But if he hasn't got life experience, and if he hasn't applied life learning into his practice, he'll be missing something and I'll be noticing it but I won't be able to put my finger on it. Man, as we come to the end of this episode, because we could keep talking forever because you're really interesting and cool dude.

Vinny 1:39:16

I could keep talking to you forever.

Bill 1:39:18

And we'll do it again some time. I wonder if I could make a request and have you play a piece of music to end this awesome episode?

Vinny 1:39:34

Well as I am, the way I am right now.

Bill 1:39:42

That's it man.

Vinny 1:39:44

I never deny a chance to perform. I don't know what I'll play but probably something that I wrote because I don't want you to have to deal with royalty issues.

Bill 1:40:05

Thank you.

Bill 1:41:55

Ladies and gentlemen, Vinny Valentino. Thank you, sir! Thank you so much for being on the podcast.

Vinny 1:42:07

Absolutely. It was a joy. I look forward to talking to you again very soon.

Bill 1:42:15

Thanks so much for joining me on today's recovery after stroke podcast. You ever wish there was just one place to go for resources, advice and support in your stroke recovery? Whether you've been navigating your journey for weeks, months or years, I know firsthand how difficult it can be to get the answers you need.

Bill 1:42:34

This road is both physically and mentally challenging from reclaiming your independence to getting back to work to rebuilding your confidence and more. Your symptoms don't follow a rulebook and as soon as you leave the hospital, you no longer have medical professionals on tap.

Bill 1:42:48

I know for me, it felt as if I was teaching myself a new language from scratch with no native speaker inside. If this sounds like you, I'm here to tell you that you're not alone. And there is a better way to navigate your recovery and rebuild a life that you love. I've created an inclusive, supportive and accessible community called [recoveryafterstroke](http://recoveryafterstroke.com).

Bill 1:43:11

This all in one support and resource program is designed to help you take your health into your own hands. This is your guidebook through every step in your journey from reducing fatigue, to strengthening your brain health to overcoming anxiety and more. To find out more and to join the community just head to recoveryafterstroke.com See you next time.

Intro 1:43:32

Importantly, we present many podcasts designed to give you an insight and understanding into the experiences of other individuals opinions and treatment protocols disgusting any podcast or the individual's own experience and we do not necessarily share the same opinion nor do we recommend any treatment protocol discussed.

Intro 1:43:50

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Intro 1:44:06

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Intro 1:44:27

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guidance from a doctor or other medical professional if you are experiencing a health emergency or think you might be, call triple zero in Australia or your local emergency number immediately for emergency assistance or go to the nearest hospital emergency department.

Intro 1:44:51

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