

# Finding Purpose After Stroke - Nicholas Kemp

Finding purpose after stroke is a key ingredient that helps with the recovery process.

Socials:

<https://ikigaitribe.com/>

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Transcription:

Bill 0:00

I think the Western culture talking about purpose kind of misses the ball and makes it about a thing that you have to work out in your head before you seek out and make it happen. Whereas it's not that at all. It's something that came just because I decided to give an I didn't realize that that's what was going to come from it, it just came.

Bill 0:24

And the first step was, make yourself available to other people and help other people. And when I think about the people on the planet that stands out, as having had an amazing purpose in life, like Mother Teresa, like Mahatma Gandhi, like Nelson Mandela, they didn't make it about themselves. They made it all about other people. And they just happen to be the vehicle that led the voice to the particular struggle of the tribe that they were leading.

Intro 1:02

This is The Recovery After Stroke podcast, with Bill Gasiamis, helping you navigate recovery after stroke.

## Introduction to Ikigai



Nicholas Kemp

Bill 1:15

It's Bill from [recoveryafterstroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com) This is Episode 121. And my guest today is Nicholas Kemp. Nicholas is the founder and host of the Ikigai Podcast. And our conversation today is about unearthing your life's purpose and the role that the felt sense of Ikigai plays whilst on life's journey.

Bill 1:37

Now, in case you've never heard of Ikigai, let me explain it briefly. Ikigai is a Japanese based life philosophy involving daily rituals, living your values, building intimate relationships, fulfilling your life's roles, and pursuing a life goal. With a healthy sense of urgency.

Bill 1:55

It can help you live longer and give you motivation and resilience in times of hardship. It can be your path to self-actualization, and to becoming your truer self. This is truly going to be a great episode.

Bill 2:12

Now, before we get started, if you have ever wondered what else I can do to help you with your stroke recovery, you should know that you can now get recovery after stroke coaching, right from the comfort of your own home. I too am a three-time stroke survivor and a brain surgery survivor and I have built for you what I

was missing when I was sent home from the hospital in the hope that you don't have to do stroke recovery as tough as I did.

Bill 2:35

Support packages give you access to a variety of tools 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so that you can also work on other areas of stroke recovery, that you don't get a chance to at physical therapy or rehabilitation. With tailored support available for less than \$8.50 per week, all recovery after stroke support packages, bring stroke recovery to you in the comfort of your own home.

Bill 2:59

To try it out, and see if it is right for you. You will get the first seven days free, as well as a 30-day money-back guarantee no questions asked. As a bonus, you will also get to face to face zoom calls with myself to take your recovery to the next level. So go to [recoveryafterstroke.com/support](https://recoveryafterstroke.com/support) to sign up.

Bill 3:19

It won't cost you anything for the first seven days. And you'll get a full refund. If you're not happy after 30 days. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. And now it's on with the show. Nicholas Kemp, welcome to the podcast.

Nicholas 3:33

Thank you, Bill. It's an honor and pleasure to be talking to you today.

Bill 3:37

Mate, every time I start a podcast I talk about with the people that I start with, I always tell them that I love the fact that they're on my podcast, I really appreciate it. It's amazing that they are on my podcast and it really is it always is.

Bill 3:52

And most of those people are stroke survivors and they take us through a conversation about where their stroke started, their stroke journey started. All the challenges that they're facing, what they're overcoming, and they're talking about how they're getting to the end of their recovery, or that acute part of their recovery, where they're starting to find a new normal.

Bill 4:15

And part of that discussion sometimes has a portion of purpose in that conversation where we talk about purpose. But for many people the conversation

doesn't talk about purpose because I think that purpose is a difficult concept to grasp. Now the reason I contacted you A you're a mate, I've known you for a while and I think you're a great guy. And that's a good start, isn't it?

Nicholas 4:48

It is a good start thank you. Yeah. I'm glad you've invited me.

Bill 4:53

And then I've started listening to your podcast that you recently launched called the Ikigai podcast and you're a fascinating guy, because you've lived in Japan for a long time. You're married to an amazing Japanese lady, and you kind of became embedded in the culture.

Bill 5:11

And you've come out of it. And you're back in Australia with some amazing bits of knowledge and learning that you've taken away from it that I feel like from listening to your podcast, has enhanced your life. And really spoke to me when I started listening to the different episodes that you've got on the podcast so far.

Bill 5:36

And I felt like I wish I knew more about this ancient wisdom that seems to come from this mystic kind of place, you know, mystical place called Japan that we don't know much about other than what we've seen on TV. So firstly, can I just start by asking you to give me a little bit about your journey that got you to Japan? How long you were there? And then what got you coming back to Australia?

Nicholas 6:11

So my first trip was actually when I was five. My father was a physicist. And he had done some research which required him to travel to various countries. And he was given he worked for the CSIRO.

Bill 6:27

That's an Australian research organization.

Nicholas 6:30

Yeah. So when that happened, he was given a first class ticket. So he started to turn it into, I guess, a family ticket for my mother and my brother and myself. And I don't really remember the trip, but I do have sort of flashes of memory.

Nicholas 6:49

And one of the countries we visited was Japan. And I guess it had a lasting impression on me. Because in my early 20s, when I was working in hospitality, and probably partly due to the tourism boom, while the Japanese, we're coming to Australia, I've really wanted to go to Japan.

Nicholas 7:12

And then I was awarded a traineeship through my college I was studying at men's college. And yeah, this one year traineeship, to go and work for a company that had a chain of restaurants, and they had big plans to expand to Melbourne.

Nicholas 7:32

So that was in 95, 96. And that was a great experience. It was just amazing. And that year went really quickly. And then that company's plans, filled through, and I actually wanted to go back to Japan. And I didn't really want to work in hospitality, because the long hours and all that sort of thing.

Nicholas 7:56

So I thought I'd go back. And really the only way I could do that was well, not the only way but for the easiest way was to go back and teach english. So that happened in 1998.

Nicholas 8:14

And I went back to Tokyo, the first trip with the traineeship was to Tokyo, and then out in the works, and one of the commercial English schools there and worked there for about three years. And sort of during this relationship, which apparently I met my wife actually met my wife before I went to Japan in Melbourne.

Nicholas 8:39

And we were just sort of friends and she was very shy, pretty hard to get to know. But we used to write to each other. And then when we if we ever met in person, she wouldn't even acknowledge me when we were sort of different countries in the past she would write to me. So she's one of the few people I've ever handwritten to. So, eventually we got married.

Bill 9:11

You wore her down enough so that she spoke to you.

Nicholas 9:16

One thing led to another so yeah. And then in 2002. I mean, I went back and forth to Japan a few times. But in 2002, I went back and I live near where my wife's from for six years.

Nicholas 9:37

And that was a small town and famous for pottery. And her father and her brothers make handmade pottery. But yeah, so I've come to experience Tokyo, the big city and also living in a village. Japan's a very interesting country.

Nicholas 10:02

What other grits I had was, I mean, I started my own school eventually. And it really tied me down because I was the only teacher and so I didn't get to explore Japan as much as I wanted.

Nicholas 10:19

And now I'm quite desperate to, we try to go back every year. But I'd love to go back and live there with sort of new freedom I have from working myself to discover all these things that I'm really now rediscovering.

Nicholas 10:39

Japan is an interesting country to live in, you can end up having a I used to describe it as a love hate relationship. Wasn't that a hated Japan, it was aspects of living there that I struggled with.

Nicholas 10:55

You're always a foreigner in Japan. It's very hard to integrate fully. And there are these unique problems in Japan that just don't exist outside the world. And they're almost upsetting because they're so unusual.

## **Hikikomori vs Ikigai**



Nicholas 11:10

And there's such a lack of support for people with mental health issues heavily things like hikikomori, and another one's lonely deaths and all these problems.

Bill 11:23

Yeah, what's hikikomori.

Nicholas 11:25

hikikomori, these teenagers just decide they're not going to go to school anymore, and they're not going to do anything and they lock themselves in their rooms. There are documentary on this in Youtube that will blow your mind.

Nicholas 11:44

And you've got literally hundreds of thousands of Japanese men who have lived in their room for the past five to 15 years. And their parents, probably out of shame, but they don't want neighbors to know, they hide the problem.

Nicholas 12:04

So they feed the problem they'll feed their child leave food at their door. And you're talking months or years go by when parents don't actually even see their own child. They're in son, spying living in the house. And it sort of blows your mind and they spend most of their time online, that they don't venture outside they have no friends they have no job.

Bill 12:29

Wow, this is a common thing that happens in Japan?

Nicholas 12:33

This is epidemic in Japan, like it's a huge problem.

Bill 12:39

Is it a new problem? As in? Is it a modern problem? Or is it something that used to occur in the past?

Nicholas 12:46

That's definitely a modern problem. But it's, I think it started happening 20 years ago, but now it's quite a big problem. And this is the lack of resources and funding and organizations to help these young men who clearly have a lack of purpose in their lives.

Nicholas 13:10

That I should touch on. It was this second trip, when I started teaching that I stumbled upon this word Ikigai. And it was one of those conversations, you have a clear memory off.

Nicholas 13:26

And I remember as for where and when it happened, and being introduced to this word and things sort of stunned that it encapsulated. Now the reason why you live and, you bet along with life.

Nicholas 13:41

And that was sort of in '98. So really, before the internet, and I did what everyone else does, and I went and taught all my coworkers this amazing word called Ikigai and it means something like the life purpose or the reason why you live and get up in the morning.

Nicholas 14:02

And so now, sort of in the past two years, because of this misinterpreted idea of it being a framework of doing something that you love that you're good at, that the world needs and that you can be paid for. I guess I felt an obligation to really study it, and then share with the rest of the world what it really is.

Nicholas 14:27

Because I knew straight away when I saw the main diagram of that there must be a misinterpretation or Western interpretation, because Japanese would never define it like that. But then I started seeing it everywhere.



# Ikigai



Bill 14:42

Yeah, so what you're referring to is that somewhere somehow this term Ikigai became popularized, and as a result of that was popularized slightly incorrectly. The things that you mentioned, though, that it stands for are still amazing things. What were they again?

Nicholas 15:00

So that framework is still a very helpful framework was actually created by a Spanish astrologer. And it was just something he sort of meditated on and came to him. So it was this idea that if you're doing something that you love, and that you're good at, that the world needs and you can be paid for it.

Nicholas 15:21

It could be purpose, obviously, in the framework of your work. Now, he just shared it in Spanish on his Facebook page, and I've got quite a lot of interest. And then someone obviously found it and translated it into English. And then that probably went a little bit viral.

Nicholas 15:47

And then one day, someone who I've interviewed Mark Quin he stumbled upon it, and then after watching a TED talk on how to live to be 100 Plus it was this TED talk about Blue Zones. And one of the countries or one of the areas is Okinawa. And then Buettner, who presented the talk, briefly mentions Ikigai in this talk, he said, you know, the Okinawans live, to be 100. And they have this lifestyle and grow their own vegetables and this strong sense of community. And this word Ikigai.

Nicholas 16:30

So this guy, Mark, he just thought it'd be a cool idea to merge Ikigai with this Venn diagram. So he just replaced the word purpose with Ikigai. And he really was only doing it for his own personal community like his own.

Intro 16:46

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'll make matters worse?

Intro 17:03

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](https://recoveryafterstroke.com) where you can download a guide that will help you.

Intro 17:25

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

Nicholas 17:49

Friends and people that read his personal blog, so famous a passing thought, and really had no knowledge of Ikigai at all, other than what he learned from that Ted talk. And that Ted Talk also created the perception that it was a word from Okinawa, with which it isn't.

Nicholas 18:09

So it's their purpose is an important aspect of Ikigai, but it has nothing to do with getting paid. Japanese will tell Ikigai has nothing to do with getting paid. And for many Japanese, it's something that they do once they retire, because then they have the freedom. Because they're not working. They're not growing up children.

Nicholas 18:35

And because they're usually quite fit and healthy from the age of 60, 65 they do

need something to occupy their time. But also, Japan actually had its own Ikigai room in the 60s with literature and books. And that's where it's explored, perhaps as a way to self actualization. And that's what I'm really interested in all the literature back then. And that's what I've been sharing.

Bill 19:10

Yeah, so what you're saying is that Venn diagram, and for anyone who's watching or listening, there'll be a copy of that Venn diagram, that you can look at the [recoveryafterstroke.com](https://www.recoveryafterstroke.com) website where this episode will reside. If you just go to the podcasts tab at the website, you'll find the this episode listed before the other episodes.

Bill 19:35

It says that basically, at the top it says that which you love, that which the world needs, that which you can be paid for that which you are good at. And then inside it says it's your passion. It's your mission. It's your vocation, it's your profession. And it seems like an amazing concept that one because if I feel like I'm doing something that I love and something that the world needs, something that I can be paid for, and something that I'm good at.

Bill 20:09

I'm pretty close to finding my purpose in life, like I'm feeling like I'm succeeding in life. Because up until the time that I was doing all those things, there was something seriously missing, I was going to work because I needed the money. I didn't really love it the world that didn't really need me to go to work and make money to pay the mortgage.

Bill 20:35

So if I'm going about my life in that way, I'm feeling really good about myself. And that's not a bad framework, but Ikigai seems to be more this type of a felt sense, something that you feel an experience, internally, rather than something that you do, physically, externally, and it might be part of those things that you do might be part of helping to create that internal feeling.

Bill 21:17

But I couldn't see that internal feeling happening for you, only you can experience it. And you could describe when it was being experienced by you, but I wouldn't be able to see it, unless you told me, did I capture anything there?

# Parts of Ikigai

## IKIGAI EXPLAINED



Nicholas 21:35

Close, I mean, you are close. So if we were to probably define Ikigai, you do it in three parts. So you have your Ikigai. So your source could be a relationship. So very good example is a child, your child. So that's your Ikigai source or your Ikigai object.

Nicholas 21:59

And then Ikigai kan, which translates to Ikigai perception or Ikigai feeling or Ikigai awareness would be these feelings of love, joy, pride, and hope for the future. So it's personal, for everyone, and it's unique, everyone's Ikigai will be different.

Nicholas 22:23

So that's why if your child is your Ikigai, which most likely will be for most parents, at some stage, especially in the young years, you know, that's got nothing to do with, you know, getting paid, or being good at.

Nicholas 22:39

You know, when you're a new parent, you're learning so you're not gonna be a good parent. I mean, you'd be a loving and caring parent, but doesn't make you the greatest parent.

Nicholas 22:48

So that's how Miyako Miyako I'll briefly mention who I've kind of termed that the mother of Ikigai psychology. She wrote this amazing book in 1966. It's, only available in Japanese, but that's how she defines it.

Nicholas 23:07

Now, you can actually tell when someone has Ikigai, because they do have this

sense of purpose. You know, someone who wrote a really interesting article who I'm interviewing next week, he kind of says, the feeling of Ikigai is almost contagious, because when you say someone who's living their Ikigai, it kind of rubs off on you.

Nicholas 23:39

Now that that would vary, in degree, depending on each person. Or we probably should just, you know, there's a few things we probably need to clear up, you know, not all Japanese have Ikigai. We're all human. So we all struggle with life, we have our problems.

Nicholas 23:56

And not every Japanese would have Ikigai. And for most Japanese, it's not even a special word. It's just a word they grow up with. Now, I mentioned on James's podcast, like it's quite hard to translate this word. And I said it would be like trying to describe mateship.

Nicholas 24:22

So if I asked you to suddenly explain mateship you wouldn't be able to tell me straight away, you'd probably have to think how am I going to explain my ship to someone who doesn't live in Australia?

Nicholas 24:33

And then if I have someone else that probably give me a completely different perspective, or at least a different interpretation. But if you went to Europe or the UK or America and you saw a book on mateship and then had mateship in the middle and friendliness and easy goingness and had some framework.

Nicholas 24:57

You'll probably find that a bit unusual because there's no framework for mateship in Australia, so it's, the West has definitely embraced this word, but to the Japanese, it's part of their vocabulary. But it is an important concept. And like many people, you know, some people pursue it and others don't obviously, because they probably because they struggle with life or they're too busy.

Bill 25:25

Yeah, for the standard reasons that we, in life don't understand our purpose or don't know what our purpose is. I feel like I found my purpose. So maybe by the end of this episode of get to understand whether that's my Ikigai, we'll explore

that now.

Bill 25:42

When you talk about mateship, for the people listening who are from a Western culture, they might understand if you and I tried to tease out what mateship is, so then we can kind of refer it back to Ikigai, and then kind of bring in the purpose conversation.

Bill 25:58

So for me, mateship is about depending on the circumstance going far beyond the call of duty for somebody who is in need somebody who needs a hand, it's about putting that person before me, it's about making sure that they feel supported that I haven't let them down.

Bill 26:26

And I'm thinking about like a natural disaster, you know, how Australians come together during a natural disaster, like the bush fires or flooding, to support their mates to make themselves available to help out wherever they can.

Bill 26:39

So I can practice mateship from Victoria, which is 3000 kilometers away from Queensland, if they have a flood, by sending a parcel of food by donating to a certain organization, you know, by bringing awareness to the plight of the people who lost their homes during the flood, and supporting one of the local charities.

Bill 27:00

And I can also offer, I can also be a mate to a friend of mine who's in need, who's next door, and has had a rough time of it and needs somebody to talk to or to ask help from. And I can be a mate to that person as well, I can put my arm around them and make them feel like they've got somebody and they're supported. So I agree with you that you can't really describe what a.

Nicholas 27:32

There's this sense of, you know, it's very well natured and easygoing, we're not you know, we're not polite about it, we'll just see what's go and help. Whereas in like Japan, that be very cautious about helping people, but that is still help in a different way.

Nicholas 27:47

But we'll go out of our way to help someone we wouldn't seek anything in return would probably be a bit of humor. And this also this connection that I've read, you know, the history of World War One and, maybe in particular, I could literally campaign and and then I found out the words origins are actually German.

Nicholas 28:16

And it means something related to table being around the table. And so that, you know, that might relate to the whole barbecue culture we have so. That's what I mean, you know, what, if we were trying to explain mateship on a podcast, this is how Japanese would have to approach Ikigai. It's complicated there's a history to it. It means different things to different people, I think mateship matters to you and me but there might be other strands where mateship doesn't matter that much.

Bill 28:55

And especially if they're not first or second generation Australians so if they haven't been born in Australia, because there's that there's a cultural difference, especially in the early years, when you arrive into a country you don't understand how things operate.

## **Philotimo**

Bill 29:14

And I know my parents who have been here since the 60s wouldn't necessarily know what mateship is but being from a great background, they would know what Philotimo is.

Bill 29:24

Which is another concept that's elusive, that's similar to Ikigai and mateship and if you describe somebody as that person has Philotimo (Speakes in Greek) there is no bigger compliment than you can make somebody then you can say about somebody.

Bill 29:42

So when you ask a greek person to describe Philotimo, they'll say to you, literally the word Philotimo is made up by two words is Philo and Timo. philo is friend and timo is honor. So the word literally means honor the friend, which sounds like mateship, when we talk about the spirit of mateship is kind of honoring somebody

else when they require when they have a need.

Bill 30:18

Whereas, so with Philotimo by honoring the friend, you could honor them, just when they come to your house and you make them a coffee, you can honor them, when you take them, a batch of your, homegrown tomatoes when they're running low. You can honor them in so many different ways. And nobody does it the same. And everyone does it differently. And it's really hard to describe Philotimo but when you describe somebody as having Philotimo, there is no bigger compliment.

Nicholas 30:51

Here, we should probably touch on the etymology of Ikigai that helps understand it too. So Ikigai composed of two words. So Iki comes from the verb Ikiru, which means to live. That's really daily living. And gai comes from the word kai, which can mean shell. And that's what kanji for shell in the word sort of represents decorated shell.

Nicholas 31:25

So back in the period, which was about, like 1000 years ago, the wealthy would collect these shells and play a game like, matching cards. So you'd have these beautiful decorated shells on the inside, they'll be placed down have sets up to 360 shells, and trying to match them and they all hand decorated and painted.

Nicholas 32:02

You have to find the pairs, that's what I'm assuming Yeah. And so as a result, this is sort of the etymology of the word how the value associated to Hikigai the guy living, the history is in this this word Kai, for this shell, which was used in the scam cook, kai was it. So it really translates to the value in living the value in fine and living.

Nicholas 32:33

And that's why the that purpose Venn diagram kind of conflicts with the idea because it's not about it's not really about achieving a life goal. It's more about your daily living. So that's why for many Japanese, their Iki guy can be something quite noble and small, you know, almost like a private personal pursuit. But at the same time, it can be the pursuit of a life defining golf.

Nicholas 33:06

So it's almost like the spectrum. And going back to the literature of the 60s, yeah,



embrace stretching. There's almost to school, two or three schools of thought of what it is. So I like to think of it as the spectrum where you can appreciate the little joys of life. But it can go into, you know, pursuing a life goal. And trying to self actualize, but where you're, you're not trying to be the best version of yourself, you're just trying to be your most honest self. And that means living your values.

Bill 33:51

So there's a sense coming to me of gratitude. So there's a portion of gratitude in there In Ikigai, living your values is something amazing. Being able to live your values, truly live your values, and then bringing that gratitude into how you're able to experience your values and how you're able to live your values.

Bill 34:25

For me, I wake up in the morning, and I'm grateful for the little things, all those little things. So perhaps I wasn't before I became a stroke survivor before I became a short stroke survivor maybe, and no idea about why it was important to practice gratitude and why being grateful was beneficial to me in my life.

Bill 34:47

But then, when I've nearly lost everything, and being able to tie my shoelaces became something that I could be grateful of, and having that awareness to become grateful that I became great. for tying my shoelaces helped me live my values. And my values. Were never about having the best the best car, the biggest house, and all that junk that we do.

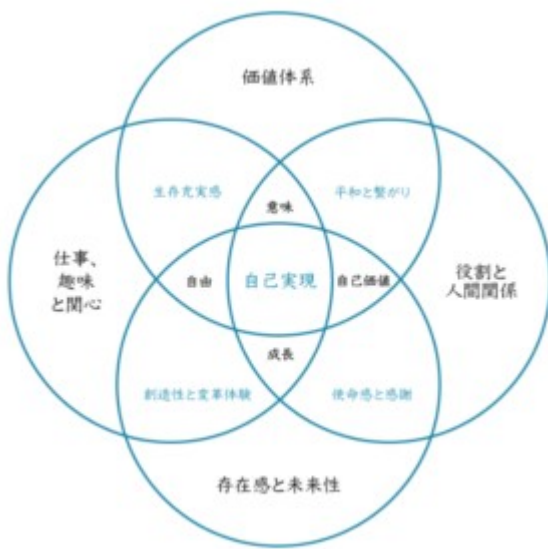
Bill 35:14

My values, were always about just connecting with people, and appreciating the simple things and understanding what was important. But somehow that got lost in just general run of the mill Western life, which includes mortgages, school fees, jobs and all the junk that goes with it, you know, so.

Bill 35:37

So what you're saying is that within Ikigai is this is this way of experiencing the opportunity to practice your values, and then also having a level of gratitude for things that adjust taken for granted, that are really important parts of life.

# Moving forward



Nicholas 36:02

Yeah, so that sort of two aspects of Ikigai one aspect, that can clearly define Ikigai compared to happiness. And this probably would relate strongly to yourself, and people who have suffered a stroke is with Ikigai, this idea that your life that you feel your life is moving forward, and you have things to look forward to.

Nicholas 36:34

And in so many books that I've read, this has mentioned that, you know, even if your life is, you know, you're struggling with your life, and you're in trouble now. You can actually feel Ikigai in the moment, if you believe things will get better, and that you can action things.

Nicholas 36:52

So it's not a false sense of hope. It's real belief, okay, right now, you know, I'm struggling, maybe related to someone who's suffered a stroke with my movements, I can't do what I used to do. But I know if I do my rehab, and with the support of others and if I stay focused, that my life will get better.

Nicholas 37:15

And so with that feeling that my life will get better. It does motivate you to keep on living, and to be proactive. So this idea that your life is moving forward, and you do have a bright future. And Ikigai responds to proactive, so you've got to be proactive. So it's not this esoteric, nice idea.

Nicholas 37:38

It's alright. If I get off the phone, if I reduce the number of hours, I'm on Netflix, and actually just do something, go back to a hobby from my childhood, or start exercising, or take the time to say to a significant other, you know, I want more connection with you, and you're gonna experience at our meeting, you got to have more value in your life.

Nicholas 38:11

So that that's a really important point. And then yeah, there's this idea of harmony and sustainability in your relationships. And this is, yeah, this is seeking intimacy in connection. But it's also being aware of your own actions and what you say. So something I went from Ken Magee, who's a modern author, he says, you know, every time we open our mouth and say something, there's always this possibility, we're going to alienate someone.

Nicholas 38:42

Just because we want to say our opinion, or get something off our chest. And so we don't often talk about sustainability, we probably talk about harmony or relationships, but we don't think I don't want to say, you know, we don't think off I say this on one end up, eroding my relationship or affecting my relationship with someone just because I have the urge to say something.

Nicholas 39:08

And so that's, and that's really typical Japanese culture Japanese a very, probably overly concerned, I would say, of what they think of others. And so as a result, they're very careful about not offending others or creating disharmony. But I think we can definitely apply it to our, our relationships where we think well, you know, I want good relationships, I want to be in harmony, I want intimacy, and especially the people I care about.

Bill 39:40

You've just described me to a tee because there was definitely a time where my relationships weren't the best. That was a call that preached in a before stroke as well. And then one of my goals became to make my relationships better and one of the reasons it became a goal was because I might have kicked the bucket and I didn't want to leave the planet with people thinking, yeah, he was alright but he was always cranky or, you know, he had all these behavioral issues that we never really told him about, you know, that he thought was normal.

Bill 40:16

So, one of the things that I became aware of was how I was impacting others, and I sought out a way to, to make good in with people who I had mistreated, and never mistreated them on purpose was traded, and just out of the natural course of being myself, you know, the natural way that I did my life.

Bill 40:45

And therefore, I reached out to a lot of people and apologized to a lot of people, I said, Thank you. And I taught a lot of people that I loved them and I kind of made good with the world so that if I did croaker if I did, croak it, I went out, at least not with that on my conscience, and hopefully created a little less distress for the people who were left behind.

Bill 41:11

As well as that, the thing that you said about being your part, you know, having your path moving forward, and your life is improving, even if it's on a small, minute amount. And I talk about the one percenters you know doing those things that each 1% at the end of 365 days, if you do 1% every day, that's 365%.

Bill 41:42

And that doesn't seem dramatic to a lot of people like my life is improved on percent like big deal. But it is that when you are able to reflect at the end of that 365 days back to see how far you've come, it is a big deal. Because there was small steps, they didn't take a lot of effort, a lot of energy.

Bill 42:05

They just took a little bit of practice and a little bit of faith in that when you did do that, the results were going to come they may not come today, tomorrow or next week. But they will come and just keep working towards getting a result. And don't hang your hat on what the result will be exactly.

Bill 42:24

It's more about let's just do something. And let's reflect back and see what the result is. When there's a big enough delay in time or enough time has passed, so that we can actually physically either see the results, or experience the result in another way. And we can actually be we can be grateful for having taken that leap of faith into improving our life by 1% every day.

Nicholas 42:57

Yeah, I guess we can relate it to that kind of Kaizen principle, or what's interpreted as the Kaizen principle, this continuous improvement. But it is one of the reasons why Japan likes the superior products, because some companies or some craftsmen just have this pursuit of their head, this pursuit of perfection, knowing they'll never attain it, but they just keep going.

Nicholas 43:31

And now they'll take extraordinary care of fine details with small data details that people don't first notice. But it's only after a certain amount of time. And suddenly, people start to recognize these amazing products or this amazing craftsmanship. And this sort of astounded once they find out. Craftsman has been working, you know, 50 years on some particular product or something. But it's something Yeah, we can relate to our daily life.

Nicholas 44:05

If we take once you know, take time to practice something or doing something, you do that sort of methodically, just for a few minutes a day, after a year or two years will be significant improvement. And it's I mean, it sounds like your stretch. Obviously, as hard as it was it's been a blessing in disguise and it's made you realize all these things, you know, there's aspects of your relationships that you thought you needed to face and do things to to improve.

Bill 44:43

And you've got this sense of mission now with what you're doing with your podcasts and the blog and your website and your public speaking and you've obviously got this different mission of disparate mission but this passionate mission to help people And this doesn't happen overnight, you've taken daily action to make this happen. And I'm sure through it, there are times where you thought. I don't know if I can keep going. But you persevered.

Nicholas 45:21

Yes. So this is where we solve this delusion in life that if we were happy when we have social recognition, or when we paid off the house, or if we have good clothes, or a car, or if we look attractive, forthwith, people lose weight, not to get healthy, but to look better.

# Chasing happiness

Nicholas 45:43

And all these things ultimately won't give us happiness. Because the problem is we're chasing happiness when what we should be trying to get is life satisfaction. So that's another aspect of sort of between maybe the western idea of, of happiness, and this idea of Ikigai is one of the seven needs of Ikigai, and one of them is this idea of life satisfaction.

Nicholas 45:56

So you could get up and exercise in the morning, and maybe not really enjoy it. But after you've finished exercise, you would have this sense of okay, I actually did something worthwhile and positive, and now, you know, feeling better. Now, you're probably not happy.

Nicholas 46:30

But you're feeling a lot better than if you didn't get up. And then you turn to social media to try and get your happiness fix, which you wouldn't get. Yeah. So I really like this idea of, if we focus on life satisfaction and fulfilment, in the process, we're going to have more moments of happiness, because we're going to be our well being well, beings can be better than one walks, and will be more receptive to things that will spark our happiness, because our well being state is better. So that's a really significant aspect of go for life satisfaction, rather than trying to see happiness.

Bill 47:19

Yeah, happiness is a byproduct of seeking out things that are satisfying for me, you know, I seek out connection with amazing people, you the guys that we meet with once a month at the pub, the people who I connect with online, through the podcast, all those moments, provide me with a level of satisfaction.

Bill 47:43

And I sought out to do that at the beginning, thinking that I'm going to do something good for the community for the stroke community. But actually, it does me more good than I realized. And that makes me happier than I have been. And it wasn't happiness I was chasing, I was chasing this sense of me feeling better about my stroke situation, my stroke journey, which then became about somebody else's stroke journey, which when they gave me feedback that they were doing

better, that made me feel better.

Bill 48:22

And then this cycle of increased levels of happiness and life satisfaction just took off. And snowboard and it became this massive thing. And I didn't even realize that my happiness was being affected and that I was happier. I just was, and now that you, you are making me focus on it.

Bill 48:44

That's what I'm noticing. That's what came from it. Now, that doesn't mean that I don't get angry, that doesn't mean I get frustrated. It doesn't mean that I don't have bad days, it does not mean that my left side never hurts doesn't mean any of those things, it just means that the more I do for other people, the more I'm doing for myself.

Bill 49:07

And that just somehow creates more happiness. And I didn't realize that that's what I was doing. But clearly, that's why I'm still doing it after nearly 120 episodes. Because it's tough to do a podcast for an hour, edit it and transcribe it and pay for the website, do all those things, get it up live to just put it out into the world.

Bill 49:33

And then and then if I was doing that, and not getting any satisfaction out of it, I would have stopped ages ago and it wouldn't have made me happy I would have been dissatisfied and unhappy with the whole process of what I went through and what I didn't achieve.

Bill 49:48

Now. That being said, if enough time had passed, and I was able to reflect on that negative situation. This potential negative situation of my podcast not succeeding, say, five years in the future from now, if I was able to look back on this hypothetical time and my podcast didn't succeed, perhaps the lesson that I learned, would have made me happier in the future.

Bill 50:16

So the pursuit of making a difference. And during this positive thing, even though it failed and made me feel negative, now, I feel like it still would have given me an opportunity to reflect on it positively down the track, because I would have

learned something from it. And I love learning from failing, and I love learning from my mistakes.

Nicholas 50:42

Yeah, I mean, you find meaning when you're serving others, but you're being of service to others. And you start getting feedback, you realize you're needed. And another Ikigai need is resonance, where you're accepted by others, and you have meaningful relationships.

Nicholas 51:09

And if you're needed, and you get a feedback, for this medium of the podcast, or it doesn't really want, it doesn't really matter what it is. And then you know, the value of your life. And, you know, it's it's not a material thing, it's someone expressing gratitude and things for if done.

Nicholas 51:34

And what's sort of become evidence may while we've been talking is, you have a role now, from your, you know, from your three strokes in your experience with the frustration of trying to find information on recovery. And the process, obviously, you became this realization, maybe, maybe I've got to be the guy who helps others get information on recovery.

Nicholas 52:02

And now here, we are now talking, you've done over 100 podcasts, you've got a website, and you've been very generous with all your information. And I'd like to quote you something that really helped me understand a core aspect of you can go missing, for me, sort of for the past year, year and a half, I was researching. And once I read this quote, or this article, it really clicked for me.

Nicholas 52:33

So and this is from venture capitalists to replace. So the secret trick to finding your key guy is to find your role within a community in your community. And when I say your community, I mean the people around you that define who you are. And every person you regularly interact with your community, your community can be often segmented into what many people appropriately called tribes.

Nicholas 53:04

So your credits community of people who have had a stroke, and you've



interviewed, obviously, many people in that community, and you have a role now, and your role is obviously to share knowledge and to help people recover from stroke. And that is a role unique to you.

Nicholas 53:27

And even if someone in different part of the world was doing something similar, you're still unique in that role, because you're doing it differently, and you're affecting people differently. So I think one key takeaways, if we can find our role within our personal community, and that can be a global community online or convey can be your local community can be your family, it can be your friends.

Nicholas 53:54

Once you know you're wrong, and then you know how to serve people. And then yeah, you're going to have this life satisfaction, you're going to have connection, intimacy, and all these benefits value meaning. So it's great that you sort of carved it out, when I'm sure you're gonna be angry, and, you know, resentful, as well, life in doubt you.

## **Life throw's a curveball**

Bill 54:24

And I was angry and resentful. And I think there's a time for that as well. Especially when everything gets put on hold and you get stuck and you stagnate and it's difficult to break the cycle of stagnation because you're moving forward and is influenced by other people at certain times, you know, stroke recovery, and those people are doctors and those people are physios and those people, all these other people and they're trying to help you but at the same time, they are keeping you sort of in this holding pattern of recovery.

Bill 55:06

And although recovery sounds positive, it also can have its negative aspects. And for me, the biggest thing of aspect was feeling like I was in this holding pattern of going to three appointments a week, which meant that by the time I went to those one hour appointments, every third day or every second day, I had spent an hour getting there an hour being there an hour coming home, and then I was exhausted, and then my entire day was gone.

Bill 55:34

So although that was a really good thing to help me recover, and get back to walking and get back to being physically active, it also got in the way with my life, because I couldn't get back to work while I was spending that much time away from work, because that just couldn't happen.

Bill 55:54

So if I allowed my head to play, the blame game on wildlife and shit, it was definitely everybody else keeping me in this space. And part of that was because I lacked the gratitude at that time for having the services available to help rehabilitate me. Part of that was because I didn't know what my purpose was in life anymore, I wasn't a dad, he was able to muck around with my son's go to work and support my family, you know, there was many things that I that I'd lost, or that were put on hold.

Bill 56:33

And I took a badly I took it negatively. But then somehow things seemed to just turn around. And I can't pinpoint exactly when that was. But I have a suspicion it was when the idea came to my head. And even though for a number of years, I didn't do anything about it. When the idea came to my head in hospital, that I should do a podcast that share story about people recovering from stroke. And I said, I imagined that's when it kind of turned the corner.

Bill 57:05

And that's and that led to all these other experiences that I've never had before I've never had the connection with people from around the world, like I have now, with this tribe and community that exists that I didn't know, was a tribe or a community. I've never had people that I can reach out to that are like me in so many ways, even though they're completely different, and from different parts of the world.

Bill 57:34

So it's been a fascinating journey. And when people do ask me about my journey, especially. Now when I speak about it, 9 years down the track. And I tell them that I found my purpose. And I haven't really deeply thought about that. or discuss that with anyone other than you right now. But it's what I said to people, and I didn't really understand what I was saying. But I did say I think I found my purpose.

Nicholas 58:08

It's a powerful having purpose. I think the problem with homeless is someone we do here and we read about with we are for lucky year, we find a good book, and it says you've got to find purpose, but it's for whatever reason at a time, it's just not a powerful message for you to understand something significant maybe has to happen in your life.

Nicholas 58:36

For you to think I think you have to think how can I help others? Rather than what can I get out of this. And it sort of go with another quote. Which this amazing movie maker Kamiya writing a book. All human beings are supported by more or less a vague sense of mission.

Nicholas 59:06

And it's a sense of responsibility for what you're living for. And it's close to what you have to do in life. And those that don't discover purpose or their mission will suffer and unfulfilling existence, while those that do will experience a strong Iki guy awareness. I mean, this book just blew me away.

Nicholas 59:31

And it's, oh, it should be translated. But it has these statements like that threat book that is blowing your mind. And this this year, this vague sense of mission that we probably all at some stage several times in our life, think I should do something and either you start taking steps to make maybe pursue that or you don't and for me and you, I noticed the last couple of years, especially for me, my life has changed.

Nicholas 1:00:07

Once I started thinking, How can I? How can I thank Japan and come back to Japan and correct this misinterpretation of eating gone? And how can I help others. And one thing I've noticed that's been completely different to all my other businesses is I had people contact me, offering to help by saying, you know, several people just reached out and said, I'm wanting to help you by free of charge, because I think what you're doing so amazing.

Nicholas 1:00:41

And I just sort of blew my mind. So I think you've probably experienced that too, once you have a sense of mission, and your focus is on helping others. Things

happen. And you realize, as you mentioned before, you don't know it, but you eventually realize, gee, I'm happier and more fulfilling. I'm really enjoying what I'm doing, despite all the, you know, all the hard work and frustration that goes into making a podcast or, making a course or writing a blog post.

Nicholas 1:01:19

And believe me, for someone who struggled with schoolwork, had to do extra English. Felt like I was an imposter, sort of teaching English in Japan. Yeah, you know, we can always find excuses not to do something. But if you can, find a sense of mission in your life, and you take steps to pursue it, things start to happen.

Bill 1:01:52

But I've never spent so much time filling my downtime with something before. So you know, before when you had downtime, at least me, they'd be not much to do. I would even describe it as maybe I was bored. And I had, you know, you know, a bit of blahs a sort of attitude towards my day or my hour ahead of me or whatever it is.

Bill 1:02:16

Now, there's not a moment in my day where I'm not thinking about, I could be doing this for the podcast, this for one of my courses, etc. And that has never happened before. And when I was at school, I was not the kind of student who studied, who put time and effort into anything, because I didn't appreciate or enjoy anything of that of that process that I was learning.

Bill 1:02:39

And when people told me, You need to find your purpose, my purpose kind of got thrust on me, when I was 21, my girlfriend at the time became pregnant, and therefore, I was going to be a dad. Well, I've been happily married now for 25 years. And everything else went away my purpose, my idea of potentially seeking out my true purpose in life.

Bill 1:03:07

Was overshadowed by this purpose of a little child coming into the world that needed my help, and it all became all-encompassing, and it was always gonna be only about the kid, and then his brother when he was born four years later, and my wife, and it was just going to be about that part of my life.

Bill 1:03:27

And that was a great purpose to have, but it's not a lifelong, ongoing purpose. It doesn't last forever, and it doesn't fulfill you know, in the same way that this new purpose of mine fulfills me. And I remember realizing that that purpose had I used by day in that when my kids kind of came out and said, we're old enough now, you know, we don't really need to help me with my life, you know, we're going to fly the coop.

Bill 1:04:01

I was like, oh, well, that's my purpose gone, like what do I do now? How am I gonna redirect my energy into something positive and incorrect good in the world. But I have come across purpose in literature or in books or in talks or in places where I went for guidance about how I'm going to find my purpose.

Bill 1:04:25

You know, the place I went to was with Tony Robbins once all I left what all I left with was more confusion about what purpose was and more frustrated about not being able to find it or seek it out or how to work, you know how to make it work for me. And that was really challenging.

Bill 1:04:45

So I think the Western culture about talking about purpose kind of misses the ball and makes it about a thing that you have to work out in your head. Before you seek out and make it happen, whereas it's not that at all. It's something that came just because I decided to give.

Bill 1:05:11

And I didn't realize that that's what was going to come from it, it just came. And the first step was, make yourself available to other people and help other people. And when I think about the people in on the planet that stand out, as having had an amazing purpose in life, like Mother Teresa, like Mahatma Gandhi, like Nelson Mandela, like all those people who are household names, they didn't make it about themselves.

Bill 1:05:45

They made it all about other people. And they just happen to be the vehicle by which that led the voice to the particular struggle of the tribe that they were leading is kind of how it feels. For me, that's what I get from those amazing

people and, and others that I didn't mention.

Nicholas 1:06:08

This idea of serving, serving others, and often being of service to others less fortunate than you. But going back to your how you found a sense of mission and purpose, Kenny America's sort of states, there's three ways we can find a sense of mission. And one is, you just look for it in an area of interest. And another issue, you make a conscious decision to solve a particular problem, or the other is it might find you. So it seems in a way it found you.

Nicholas 1:06:58

And then you decided I'm gonna help people, you know, with what I've been struggling with. And I wanted to mention another aspect of Ei is freedom. And Kamiya says when we're not really free, because we have constraints, but we can have a sense of freedom.

Nicholas 1:07:27

And so she says, it's really important that despite life's constraints, that we feel our freedom through our choices, we always have the freedom to make choices. And even if those choices are, you know, self-sacrificing, self-sacrificing. So obviously, as a parent, you make a lot of choices for children.

Nicholas 1:07:57

That mean you're giving up time or money or maybe a passion. And that's an expression of freedom as well, or delayed gratification that you won't do something now because you know, it's going to benefit you in the future.

Nicholas 1:08:15

So that's probably something your community struggles with, they've probably lost freedom, maybe with their physical movement, and that would be very hard to deal with, because it's something they go through every waking moment.

Nicholas 1:08:38

But I would hope that maybe this guy need that we, yeah, we're not really free, but we can have the feeling of freedom in our choices, I hope that could answer that help them with their decision-making process. Along with this idea, that you if you can feel your life is moving forward in a positive direction.

Nicholas 1:09:07

And even in that moment, you can feel a little bit better because you're kind of feeling a key guy. This one quote this from my favorite quote, many realize the power of a sense of mission. So this is what Kenny wrote in her diary. As she was writing this, this book called granted.

Nicholas 1:09:34

So yeah, this is the book Ikigai. Yeah, so she published this Polish in 1966. So not from this book from her diary, she wrote, in the afternoon, I went to the van Gough exhibition in Kyoto, and I was overwhelmed by powerful grain. And I felt once again that I should devote myself to expression at the exhibition.

Nicholas 1:10:00

During my train ride home, I continue to ruminate on this and repeat it to myself, devote the rest of your life completely to this mission, I should finish my dissertation as soon as possible. So I may embark on work to fulfill my mission. And so her mission was writing, and she desperately wanted to write this book.

Nicholas 1:10:25

So imagine yourself, if you've gone into the city, have you gone to some exhibition, you're inspired by an artist, and then on the train ride home, you're thinking, I've got to devote myself to something in my life. And that is so powerful, I mean, to think. Not for Your glory and fame, but because you have this strong sense of mission. And so maybe you've found that what you're doing now, and I think I've found it tomorrow I'm doing now.

Bill 1:11:04

That's brilliant, man. Speaking of that, where can people find out more about you and your podcast?

Nicholas 1:11:11

So they can go to [ikigaitribe.com](https://ikigaitribe.com). And I have actually got some worksheets, that sort of similar to the Venn diagram that they could download. And I've also got, like your podcasts.

Bill 1:11:25

Awesome mate I'll make sure that they're links available at the website [recoveryafterstroke.com](https://recoveryafterstroke.com) that link back to [ikigaitribe.com](https://ikigaitribe.com), where people can learn a little bit more about you listen to your podcast, and I feel like we're going to have to have another conversation about the amazing work that you're doing.

Because I think it's going to make a massive difference to my community. Thanks so much for being on the podcast

Nicholas 1:11:51

Thank you for having me and I look forward to us catching up in person hopefully soon.

Bill 1:11:55

Same here mate I wouldn't enjoy anything more at the moment. Thank you so much.

Intro 1:12:04

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Intro 1:12:31

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Intro 1:12:47

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Intro 1:12:59

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Intro 1:13:08

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Intro 1:13:22

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Intro 1:13:38

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