

Finding Yourself After Stroke - Letisha Living

Letisha Living was a 35-year-old mum of three when she woke in the middle of the night as a result of the symptoms of an ischemic stroke.

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How was pregnancy different after the stroke compared to the first three times when you were stroke free?

Letisha Living 0:06

I was told that I would probably need to terminate because it was too high that was saying was too high risk to go through with it. So I needed a cardiologist, an endocrinologist neurologist, all talking with the Guinee OB as to whether this is was going to be something that could happen. So they had lots of meetings, I went to a few meetings and I got the all-clear at about 13 weeks God that time they were saying this might not be something that that will happen. So 13 weeks, I've got the Okay, and then I had to be monitored every week and delivered by cesarean.

Intro 0:56

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

Bill Gasiamis 1:09

Hello, and welcome to episode 204 of the recovery after stroke podcast. If you're a stroke survivor with a story to share about your experience with stroke, and you have been thinking about reaching out to be a guest on the show, but were waiting for the right time? This is it.

Introduction



Bill Gasiamis 1:25

If you go to recoveryafterstroke.com/contact you'll find a form that you can fill out to apply and be a guest on the show. As soon as I receive your request, I will respond with more details on how you can choose time that works for you. And for me to meet over zoom. Now, my guest today is Letisha Living, who had a stroke at age 35. And two months after the stroke, she found out that she was pregnant with her fourth child. Letisha recently launched a new book called Finding Yourself After Stroke, Letisha Living welcome to the podcast.

Letisha Living 2:06

Hi, Bill. Thanks for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 2:08

My pleasure. Thanks for being here. Tell us a little bit about what happened to you.

Letisha Living 2:12

10 years ago, while I was sleeping, I had a stroke. Yes, it woke me up. Totally unexpected. But as a long-term migraine sufferer, I thought I was having a very bad migraine. So I never thought for one second that I was having a stroke. And I had my four-year-old lying in bed with me.

Letisha Living 2:40

So I became more concerned about him and not wanting to wake him up than what was going on with me. So I tried to get up because I thought well, I've got this extreme head pain. And I knew that I could walk I had pins and needles on one side.

Letisha Living 2:58

And so I feel like it's a migraine, it'll pass. And I waited until morning. And then I realized, oh, there's something seriously wrong with my vision. So I couldn't see out of the right side at all. And I still had the pins and needles. So again, not even thinking for one second that I had a stroke.

Letisha Living 3:26

So I went to the medical center, and they thought it may have been a reaction to the contraceptive implant. And so they removed that and gave me some painkillers then go home and rest. Again, just thinking it was a migraine. And next day, no better still had pins and needles head was still pounding vision hadn't returned. And then so I went to a different medical center still not thinking for one second that I was having a stroke. And that's when I said I gotta go straight to emergency.

Bill Gasiamis 4:07

So with the migraines did you ever get pins and needles as a symptom of migraines? Was that ever connected?

Letisha Living 4:17

No so I thought it was a migraine because of the extremity of the extreme headache that I was having. And so I thought to myself, Oh, maybe all the migraines that I've had before weren't migraines, and this is the real one but I didn't have visual disturbances so that's what I thought was happening but it was just different.

Bill Gasiamis 4:45

How many hours elapsed from when it woke you to when you finally got to hospital?

Letisha Living 4:52

Four days. I had a stroke on Thursday night, and I was in emergency on Monday.

Bill Gasiamis 5:06

So it was an ischemic stroke?

Letisha Living 5:08

It was.

Bill Gasiamis 5:09

Is there an underlying cause now? Do they know what caused it?

The Cause Of Letisha Living's Stroke

Letisha Living 5:12

Yeah. So when they realized that I had a stroke, and I had a CT scan, and then I had an MRI and that's when they found it. Tuesday, they did some investigation. So they the toe or I think was the transesophageal echocardiogram. And during that they found a hole in my heart.

Letisha Living 5:42

And so that combined with being on contraception, and at the time, I smoked, gave up right there and then having stress in my life, and being a migraine sufferer. It was like the perfect storm. It wasn't like, would this ever happen? It was when, when would this happen?

Bill Gasiamis 6:01

Yeah, I know about that perfect storm situations kind of described the situation that led to the bleed in my brain. Although it was a congenital defect in my head, and a faulty blood vessel. I still did a lot of things that didn't make the situation better. What kind of stress were you under at that time?

Letisha Living 6:28

Post-relationship stress, work stress. I was in quite a stressful work environment. My job description meant I had to be on call 24/7. I didn't relax. I was just on the go all of the time. I wasn't making healthy lifestyle choices wasn't eating properly.

I was smoking, drinking too much just not taking care of myself.

Bill Gasiamis 7:01

Were you on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week? And were you the only person that could do that role? How come you found yourself sort of stuck in that situation?

Letisha Living 7:10

I was in a senior management position for an aged care provider. So overseeing all of the management for that facility. So if something happens in the middle of the night, one of the residents, so the fire alarms went off or something happened. I was the person that was notified.

Bill Gasiamis 7:31

Yeah. But did that happen? Often?

Letisha Living 7:36

Yeah, my phone was on 24/7. And I will get calls.

Bill Gasiamis 7:44

And as a mum of a four-year-old, did you have support there for your four-year-old? I know you mentioned that you had post-relationship challenges there. So it sounds like you were a single mum at the time? How did you manage that whole come and sort something out at the aged care facility at like the early hours of the morning?

Letisha Living 8:10

Yeah, so most of all, we had staff on 24 hours, so but they would need to inform me or if they needed direction, they'd have to call me so I didn't have to go in at night. But if I did have to go in my four-year-old could come with me.

Letisha Living 8:27

And I was a single mom. But I had just recently started seeing somebody after I had come out of the end of this relationship. Then got pregnant about two months after my stroke. So the contraceptive implant didn't work.

Letisha Living 8:47

And yeah, life just took a totally different direction. But I call it my stroke of luck, because I couldn't have kept going down that road for long. So and, but it was

hard, because it's very tied to my job and all that that was my identity. So and I didn't know how to stop because I'd been on the go for so long. My stroke said, Yep, no, you've got to stop now.

Letisha Living Had A Patent Foramen Ovale (PFO)



What is a PFO?

Bill Gasiamis 9:16

Yeah, certainly did do that. And it also revealed other underlying conditions that often people who have a Patent Foramen Ovale or PFO in their heart, don't know about it. And then in order to, well, not in order to work it out, but they work it out after they've had a stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 9:29

And usually that comes with sometimes it comes with brain surgery or complications from stroke, and then they're dealing with all that stuff. And then they have to have heart surgery. Did you end up having heart surgery as well?

Letisha Living 9:52

I had my heart surgery nine years after my stroke. So I had my stroke they found the PFO, and at that time 10 years ago now, it was still relatively new as to what they would do for post-stroke with a PFO, like they know now, because it's been 10 years worth of history, they know if you've had a stroke and PFO will close it.

Letisha Living 10:20

But back then they weren't doing that. They were seeing it a little bit too high

risk. So yeah, nine years it took for me to get mine done. And, and I'm telling you now I've had a lot of anxiety, I've had a lot of anxiety in these nine years because I kept thinking, am I going to have another stroke? Would I survive another stroke? Could this happen again at any time?

Bill Gasiamis 10:49

Were they taking any preventative action to stop more clots from forming? Were you on warfarin, for example?

Letisha Living 10:58

I wasn't on warfarin, I was on aspirin, I still take aspirin. And then in the lead up to the closure part and post surgery I was on. I think it's called that might not be the right name, I was on some getting medication a little while.

Bill Gasiamis 11:18

Yeah. Which is similar to warfarin, it thins the blood supposed to stop potential formation of other clots. So how did you recover from that? heart surgery? Was that something that you got back to life quickly after? Or did it take a little bit of time, how's that going?

Letisha Living 11:43

It was, daunting in the lead up, because they go in via your femoral artery with a cardiac catheter that goes up into your heart. And that for me, it just seems so scary. So I just had this massive fear that I was going and prior to even having my stroke, I just always had this vision, this fear that I will die on the theater table.

Letisha Living 12:10

And then the day of it, they put two holes into my femoral and they got it on the third time. I didn't know this until I read my notes afterwards. I was like, My worst fear actually did come true. But still here. But afterwards, it was quite easy. I mean, they went in they they put the device in, and then your tissue grows over it.

Letisha Living 12:37

I haven't had any complications. Every now and then I do feel like a little bit of racy heart. But apart from that, and everything's fine. But I just have to carry a card with me at all time now at all times now and let people know if I need to have an MRI or something. I can only go into special machines or I think I might be good airports. I'm not sure yet. but yeah I carry a card now.

Bill Gasiamis 13:05

Okay, so the procedure, although it's invasive, there's not a lot of like trauma to the chest cavity or anything like that to enter and find the heart. They do it all from the inside of the artery.

Letisha Living 13:21

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 13:24

Yeah, that means recovery is quite quick?

Letisha Living 13:33

Yeah. I went home the next day.

Bill Gasiamis 13:36

And then where you just supposed to be taking it easy for a few days? What's the procedure after that?

Letisha Living 13:45

So I spent 24 hours in ICA. And then they just said, Yeah, take it easy. Four to six weeks, you probably won't even notice that if anything happens, just return for emergency and we'll see you there. Yeah, it's been a year now. So it's been in for a year. And apart from a couple of slightly racy bits. Everything's been fine.

Post-Stroke Deficits

Bill Gasiamis 14:13

So what did the stroke leave you with? What kind of deficits did you have to deal with?

Letisha Living 14:19

I, the vision never returned. So when I at the time, I thought I was having a migraine I was having the, or the visual disturbance that's never returned. So I've got what they call, right-sided hum. Not even sure if I'm saying this correctly, homogenous hanging OPR or human OCR. So that's the full visual field deficit loss on both sides of my eyes on the right sides. Okay.

Bill Gasiamis 14:54

And then was there any other physical deficits that you had to overcome walking

or rehabilitation on Have any sought to get your limbs working again.

Letisha Living 15:05

So I was so fortunate that the pins and needles didn't stop. And I didn't walk for a few days, and then I could return to walking. But my right hand, I still have weakness in that. When I'm tired, I'll drop things, sometimes I forget that I can't completely grasp, like I used to do, I still have some spasticity in my hand. But apart from that, everything's fine. And you probably wouldn't have notice unless I mentioned it.

Bill Gasiamis 15:36

Is that a good thing that people don't notice, can't tell that you've had a stroke, or is it a bit of a challenge?

Letisha Living 15:45

It's pros and cons, because nobody knows unless I tell them. But then in the same time, it's like, I do have this visual loss. And I sort of have a lot of pride too. So I won't walk around with a cane, and a guide dog and a badge that says, hey, I'm blind.

Letisha Living 16:05

So when I go out into the, you know, the busy shopping centers and things, people don't know that I can't see them. So they will walk straight into me. And I don't know that they're there. And they could be thinking, Oh, who's this rude person and just walking straight into me, I'm not getting out of the way. Apart from that. The perception, like I after my stroke, I went for a walk/run and realized I couldn't do that.

Letisha Living 16:34

And I fell and hurt my ankle and knee badly. So I couldn't return to netball, or those sort of contact sports, because I can't see things coming at me. So that's probably the biggest thing, and I never got my driver's license back. So I just believe that independence, and that was a massive thing that took me quite a few years to accept that I probably won't be able to drive again.

Bill Gasiamis 17:03

As the use of vehicles like Uber or taxis or any of that kind of stuff make that loss of independence better, or is it not the same? Does it not really cut it when it comes to being completely and totally free to travel wherever you want.

Letisha Living 17:22

I'm used to it now so I use Uber. And I'm so grateful for Uber, it's great, and it's a lot cheaper than taxis. But it's still is challenging, because I have to plan everything ahead and rely on other people I love. And I think we all do love that you can't wait to get out driver's license and be an independent person. Now you just want to make those decisions and even snap decisions like, Okay, let's go here now, or what do you want to do? Or let's stop here on the way home? That doesn't really happen for me. But I have adapted.

Bill Gasiamis 18:03

Yeah, and you've probably got friends who pick you up and take you places and all of that kind of stuff.

Letisha Living 18:11

I'm so lucky to have that.

Bill Gasiamis 18:12

Yeah, I know how frustrating it was for me when I wasn't able to drive for a few months. I think it was probably all up maybe, you know, eight or nine months where I wasn't allowed to drive or able to. And I had my dad and different people picking me up and the rest of it. And it was really nice for them to do so. But it wasn't the same. It was still really felt like I was inconvenience everybody.

Bill Gasiamis 18:40

I was in a way, but they were happy to do it. And then I felt like I just couldn't do things on a whim where I would have beforehand, I had to plan ahead and find a way to get from A to B. And then maybe in my mind, it felt like it took longer to get to places where maybe didn't you know, with traffic in in a city like Melbourne public transport is not that much slower.

Bill Gasiamis 19:09

Just this perception that it's not as convenient as a car. But also there are some places in Melbourne where public transport doesn't get to. So then that really is inconvenient. And you do have to find another way to get there.

Bill Gasiamis 19:28

A lot of people work towards getting their driver's license back after shake is one of the big things that they want to get back. And I can see why it changes the way that you're able to move around and the things that you're able to access whether

they are medical services or or entertainment or any of those things. It just changes the way that you get to access those places.

Letisha Living 19:57

Yeah, it was difficult I mean one minute, I'm dragging my kids to and from school and their sporting commitments, and then the next, I can't leave the house without relying on somebody else.

Bill Gasiamis 20:12

And you've discovered a couple of months after your stroke that you're pregnant. And then you had to go through pregnancy for the second time, you know what pregnancy is like, because you've been through before, or was it the fourth time. So you've got to go through pregnancy, the fourth time. So you've had these other three pregnancies, you know exactly what they like, stroke free.

Intro 20:38

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

Intro 21:08

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 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.

Bill Gasiamis 21:38

How was pregnancy different after the stroke compared to the first three times when you were stroke free.

Pregnancy After The Stroke

Letisha Living 21:47

It was a shock the same? Definitely wasn't expecting it. And I was told that I would probably need to terminate because it was too high they were saying it was too high risk to go through with it. So I needed cardiologist endocrinologist neurologist, all talking with the GyneOB as to whether this was going to be something that could happen.

Letisha Living 22:23

So they had lots of meetings, I went to a few meetings, and I got the all clear at about 13 weeks. Yeah, but for that time, they were saying this might not be something that will happen. And so 13 weeks, I've got the Okay, and then I had to be monitored every week and deliver by cesarean.

Bill Gasiamis 22:50

Yeah. Was that a massive interruption in your life being required well, for your health reasons, right, obviously, for the right reasons, but being required to bid hospital weekly and going for weekly checkups. Amongst other things, I imagine you're still also doing stroke recovery. But now you're going in for this other checkup for how does it impact your daily life and the things that you can and can't get done? Especially when it comes to healing and recovery from stroke?

Letisha Living 23:21

Yeah, it was huge. And I have to say that it kind of saved me because it gave me something different to focus on. Because I was too busy focused on everything that I've lost. I've lost my job, I'd lost my vision, I've lost my identity, I've lost everything. And so he gave me a new purpose and a new direction.

Bill Gasiamis 23:51

Well, kids will do that. Sounds like he came along at just the right time. Because kids don't really care if you've had a stroke or not, they just need you to care for them be the mom do all those things. And I know that a lot of stroke survivors have had kids will complain about the difficulty of raising the child while they won't complain, they'll express the difficulty of raising the child while also trying to recover from stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 24:24

But also, there's the underlying benefit that they get from having a kid at the same time or around about the same time because it does require you to make the most of your opportunities to recover and do all the things that you need to do. And there is a positive element to that for some people, although it can be draining and a lot harder to recover from stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 24:51

I haven't come across too many people who think that while they obviously would have preferred things to be differently with a stroke, etc. But they wouldn't have really gone out of their way to change things as far as finding out that they're pregnant just after a stroke, or they had this young baby to come to after they had a stroke, and motivated people to get well and get out of hospital and overcome their challenges to be home for that child. So it's a real interesting conundrum and blessing and all these weird emotions and things all wrapped up in the one little bundle that is born and is relying on you, for the majority of its ability to be alive and support and the rest of it.

Letisha Living 25:51

And that's why he saved me, because I got so depressed afterwards. And he just gave me the new focus. And I knew that I needed to get better. Like, my recovery was mostly mental, emotional, more than the physical having to learn how to walk and talk, and things like that I had to overcome the mental-emotional challenges.

Letisha Living 26:21

And so he gave me that I'd like to stay home, I'd like to be a stay-at-home mom. Prior to that I was a working mom. So my kids actually got to see me, I got to see them. We got to spend time together. Yeah. So I actually got to be the man that I actually always wanted to be. But never was I did change things. But I did have that guilt. I mean, I, I still had the weakness in my right hand.

Letisha Living 26:48

So I couldn't exactly I couldn't see. So we would have to sit down and roll the ball to each other. And I'd be rolling it with one hand instead of throwing and catching it because I couldn't see or catch. So but we just adapted and did things differently. And like you said, they don't know. Kids just love you for you. You know, I was my own harshest critic, but he didn't know any of my flaws or anything. So yeah, it's been good learning.

Letisha Living 27:04

Does he use it against you? Have you told him that he was your savior? And does he use it against you now?

Letisha Living 27:29

No, he doesn't use it against me.

Bill Gasiamis 27:34

I would use it against my parents, if they said I was their Savior, I'd be going well, you know, I deserve something back now. Like you need to give me more pocket money or you need to be easier on me.

Letisha Living 27:48

Let's not give him any ideas.

Bill Gasiamis 27:51

All right. Fair enough. So with regards to your emotional and psychological recovery, were you aware that you needed to focus in that area? And did you get support? Was there support available? And did you take up that support?

Letisha Living 28:13

Not at first, I was too in my hand. And very. I think I felt very ashamed around everything that happened to me. So I didn't want to talk about stroke, I was ashamed of being a young stroke survivor, I was ashamed of having disabilities that I had. And so that was very embarrassing. I did try some counseling for a little while. And it just wasn't working for me.

Letisha Living 28:40

But that was because I wasn't open to it. It wasn't until I had the acceptance of my own stroke and what had happened and that, that healing could begin for me. I could go on and study NLP and other things. I got to learn about my own mindset, my own programming, my limiting beliefs and things like that. And it just, it took me more than anything else to accept me for who I am.

Bill Gasiamis 29:17

Yeah, that's important. Acceptance is important. And it's a really good place to start from. And if you don't get to acceptance, maybe you're starting your recovery in a different place. And maybe it's not leading to the outcome that you're after to feel better about yourself and to get through all the challenges that

are to come.

Bill Gasiamis 29:39

I definitely also started that journey of self-reflection, and personal development and all that type of thing after the stroke. I had my stroke in 2012 Also, I was 37 at the time and I had never really done any personal development work. Although I had been to counseling quite a lot. And I appreciated the ability to go to counseling and talk through challenges, problems and all the other stuff that was bugging me.

Bill Gasiamis 30:09

But I never went there with the idea that what I would also do is make some changes personal changes myself about the things that I disliked. And that's what was different about recovery after the stroke it was that I not only did all the stuff I was doing referred before going to counseling and doing all those types of things.

Bill Gasiamis 30:33

I also took responsibility to change some of the stuff that I was contributing to the problems that I was having, which I wasn't aware of. Before, I had no awareness that I was also responsible for some of the stuff that I was experiencing that I didn't like. So that was a huge help.

Letisha Living 30:56

Yes, sometimes we don't realize how we are actually contributing to our own outcomes.

Bill Gasiamis 31:03

At the beginning of that transformational journey for you, did you appreciate when somebody says to you hey, Leticia, you know that you're probably the one that's in your way, they may not have said it like that. But I remember at counseling, my psychologist said that to me, she said, you know, you've been going on and on about all these other people causing all these problems.

Bill Gasiamis 31:28

And then she said to me one day is there a chance that it's you. And of course, I swore at her. I got up and stormed out, we had a great relationship. So it was all within context. And it was okay, you know, for me to respond that way and she knew that I wasn't attacking her or being quite personally aggressive, or rude or anything, but But it took a while for it to sink in that I was the guy. And I didn't

like other people telling me that I was. So how did you cope with that? Or did you accept that? Or was that okay?

Letisha Living 32:17

It took me some time. I mean, for me, it was really, I was running on people pleasing, and things like that. So it was, why aren't my relationships the way I feel I deserve them to me. And it's because of, I'm not putting out strong, healthy boundaries, I'm not respecting myself by saying, This is what I need, or this is what I don't want, or this is what I expect from you.

Letisha Living 32:45

And so I had to go from doormat to respecting myself first. And unfortunately, that meant pretty well, most of the people in my life disappeared. But now, my relationships are genuine, I can trust the people that I'm with. We can respect each other, I know that they respect me, they don't see me as a doormat or someone to take advantage of.

Letisha Living 33:13

And, yeah, it's better when you've got people, when you've got genuine relationships. And you can see, you know, how you, like you said, how you contribute to these outcomes yourself. But I wasn't aware of that prior, I had to sort of figure it out by having lots of challenging moments.

Bill Gasiamis 33:35

Yeah, and it's a challenging moment to get you through to the new awareness or to the other side where you learn something and you grow. And it's great when you haven't got people in your life that the people, and it's really interesting, isn't it, like, you create those new boundaries. And then you have to be alone for a little while you, you become lonely, you don't have all these other people, right?

Bill Gasiamis 34:10

And it's because they don't relate to you in the same way that they were relating to you before. So they can't maybe they're not in this stage of evolving and changing and coming on on the ride with you. And they're like, I don't know this person anymore. I don't relate to them, and they stop hanging out. So then you've got to build a new circle of supportive community and a new circle of friends. And that can take some time.

Letisha Living 34:40

Yeah. It did. And I think for me, it was just being more true to who I was as a person. What is it that I'm really genuinely interested in? Who do I want to be? Who do I want to hang around with what do I want my life to look like? And what do I need to do to get there?

Bill Gasiamis 35:04

It's probably one of the hardest things that I had to go through and understand. And then there's also some people that you can't just cut ties with. Because they're your family, and they're still great friends, and they're still great people, they're just you're not relating to them in the same way.

Family Support



Bill Gasiamis 35:29

And it's some people you become distant to, even though they're part of your close-knit family. And that's also hard in being able to relate to them in a different way, now that you've kind of changed or evolved your thinking, you still have to accept them for who they are, and not necessarily disengage with them and get rid of them.

Letisha Living 35:50

I have disconnected or become estranged from my family of origin. So I don't have a relationship, I haven't had a relationship for nearly 10 years now with my parents or my siblings, and it was really hard. I was very depressed. So my youngest baby that I've had doesn't know he's aunties, uncles, cousins, grandparents.

Letisha Living 36:13

And being a single parent and post stroke survivor with the disabilities and not having that support was really, really hard. And that was part of that mental emotional challenge that I had to get past. But I have met people who do accept me and my stroke, who do accept with me and don't judge me, and are supportive of me who have become that in place of what would otherwise have been that family support.

Bill Gasiamis 36:45

Right? That's a pretty dramatic change, then. And that's one that takes a lot of courage. Was it you that distanced yourself? Or did they distance themselves? Or did it happen simultaneously?

Letisha Living 37:00

It was a bit of both. So the dysfunctional patterns were there prior to my strike. But I was just putting up with them, because, hey, they're family. So you know, but afterwards, when I'd made a decision about, I would just say to myself, if these people weren't my family, would I accept this from them? Would I want them in my life? and it was either a yes or no. And then that's where I had to make that decision and stick with it. I mean, I went back and forth a couple of times, but the repeated patterns of behavior are always there. And I made a decision about how I deserve to be treated, and I've stuck with it. It's not about holding grudges or not, my my, my values are very ingrained in family. So that was so hard for me to go against everything that I believed in.

Bill Gasiamis 38:04

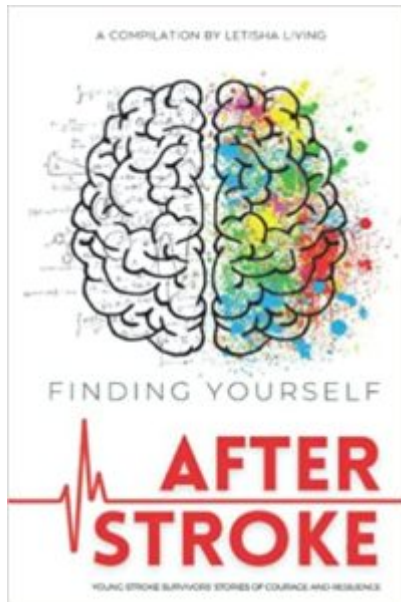
But boundaries are really important. Because emotional turmoil, emotional manipulation, any of the things that cause an emotional response in a negative way is requires a lot of energy. I know it's really difficult for me to get through emotional problems that linger, they just drain your ability to do other things and to participate in the rest of your life. And I can't leave emotional challenges attended to or unresolved for too long, because I just can't focus on everything else. I can't be a person that operates successfully, if I don't if I don't get that stuff sorted.

Letisha Living 38:54

Yeah, I'm the same, just unresolved things that will just continue playing on my mind forever. And repeated patterns. Also, I just feel like we can't keep having

same conversations. If we're not changing anything, nothing's changing. And then I'm like well, do I want to do this? Or don't I.

Finding Yourself After Stroke



Bill Gasiamis 39:15

I completely understand that. You're a bit of a creative person as well. And you tend to want to put things out there that you think are going to be helpful for people. So one of the things that you've done recently is you've created a book. Tell me a little bit about the book, what it's called and how it came to be. And who's involved.

Letisha Living 39:45

I compiled a book, it's titled, Finding Yourself After Stroke. And very, very proud of it. It features 26 young stroke survivors from all over the world. Because as we know, every stroke story is different. So we've got lots of different stories from everywhere.

Letisha Living 40:06

They've got authors contributing from America, South America, Australia, Korea, Cambodia, Europe, UK and South Africa. So lots of people coming together, being very open, warts and all telling their stories about the lead up to their stroke. What happened? What caused it? Their life and perception and how things have changed for them during the rehab and recovery post-stroke?

Bill Gasiamis 40:41

And when was the book released? Is it available yet?

Letisha Living 40:48

We had an issue with the printing. So it should have been released by now. And I was hoping that I could show it for you on this podcast, but I don't have the hardcopy yet that arrives on Tuesday. And so once I see that hardcopy, and make sure the covers has printed properly, that there's no error on the pages or the page numbers or whatever, we're ready to go from Tuesday, the book will be published and available.

Bill Gasiamis 41:14

Fantastic. So Tuesday will be July the fifth or something? What will it be?

Letisha Living 41:23

Let me just have a quick look. I think it's the seventh? Oh no, the fifth you're right.

Bill Gasiamis 41:30

Yeah. So that will be July the fifth. And we are recording this. Before that. I think it's July the second today, when we're recording this. And this interview will go out in a couple of weeks time. So hopefully by the time the interview has gone out, we'll have already able to send people to the link to find the book that they can get it on Amazon, I believe.

Letisha Living 41:56

Yeah. So if you know one of the authors in the book, reach out to them and purchase a copy through them and support them. If you don't know any of the authors in the book, you can find us on Facebook or Instagram, which is Finding Yourself After Stroke. Send us a message there, Or yes, it will be available worldwide through Amazon.

Bill Gasiamis 42:19

So what's the idea behind the book? What's the reason that you felt that you need to put this book out there?

Letisha Living 42:27

It was on my mind for a few years, and it just wouldn't leave. So I figured I had to do it. And the reasoning why was I had a very challenging time post-stroke I was so I will say identified by who I was prior to that it was such a hard time for me to

mentally emotionally recover.

Letisha Living 42:56

Like I felt like I had to re-find myself like Who was I now? And and it was really isolating. And it wasn't until I started reaching out into some of the stroke groups and talking to people and connecting with other people that I realized, Oh, hang on a minute. I'm not the only one. There are so many people who say basically what I'm saying.

Letisha Living 43:20

And I thought, How good would it have been to have something like this book, when I had my stroke, because I'm quite introverted, I would never have gone to a stroke meetup group that just there's no way that would have happened for me.

Letisha Living 43:38

And so if I could have had this quiet space book where I could read or feel connected and slowly reach out in my own time and realize that it wasn't the only one, I just thought maybe I'm not the only one that this is something that could provide hope to people.

Letisha Living 43:54

So they know. They're not the only ones that there is recovery head that recovery happens years and decades afterwards, and that they're really not alone, even though every stroke event and recovery journey is different. And I just hope that when somebody reads it that they can find themselves in there somewhere.

Bill Gasiamis 44:18

Yeah, 26 young stroke survivors whose lives have been suddenly and unexpectedly impacted by stroke. I think that being that it's such a broad range of people and that they're from a large range of different backgrounds and ethnicities, etc. I think it's gonna definitely relate to a lot of different people and give them perhaps a story of at least one of those stroke survivors who are going to really relate to and go wow, like, I feel like that person or I know what that person's going through or are it's great that somebody knows what I'm going through.

Letisha Living 45:00

Yeah, that relatability just really just makes things so much different when you feel like you can relate to somebody else. I mean, I do get messages. Now, some

people are following the pages on Instagram, and Facebook and people send me messages saying, you know, thank you, this is me. And, you know, thanks for doing what you're doing. And so I know that we have really done something wonderful. Like I've been able to take the most challenging time of my life and turn it into something that is a gift for others.

Bill Gasiamis 45:36

Yeah. Have you had the opportunity to meet all the stroke survivors? One-on-one?

Letisha Living 45:41

Not one on one, because some of them are overseas, but I'm connected to them all. And they're just all amazing people, all just doing doing their post-stroke life in their own way and changing lives one at a time. I do want to meet all the ones in Australia.

Letisha Living 46:11

So actually I'm telling you something now that we haven't openly shared or even planned yet, but we want to do an online launch for stroke week. An online launch of the book for during stroke week. And then afterwards, I'll go to Sydney and Melbourne. I'll meet all of the authors in South Wales in Sydney, and all the ones in Victoria in Melbourne.

Bill Gasiamis 46:34

And the stroke week is the Australian week of Stroke Awareness. And it's run by the Stroke Foundation. Is that right?

Letisha Living 46:46

Yeah. The 14th of August.

Bill Gasiamis 46:50

Okay, that's an annual event that happens. And there's a whole bunch of stuff going on, it's probably of the best times to launch a book about stroke, that's for sure. How long did it take to put the book together? And how hard was it to get 26 stroke survivors to deliver on the shedule that you had given them?

Letisha Living 47:16

Yeah, so it's been almost a year and a half in the making. So I first went to my publisher about a year and a half ago and put the concept to her. And she said, Yes. And from then we put a timeline together. And I put a call out and I was

looking for originally just 20 people who were open to it. It wasn't that easy. I thought that would be easy to find 20 people who would be interested in it. So it probably took us till about August or September, when we filled all of the spaces.

Spreading Awareness - Letisha Living



Letisha Living 47:57

And we ended up with 26, instead of 20. So all we had probably 30 something but a few dropped out along the way. And now we've got our 26. And we did the chapters we've done the editing, we went back and forth making sure that their stories were correct that we made a few tweaks to different sentences, so they are more easily easily read. Yeah, it's been a journey, but it's been great. It's been great. It's a good group of people. Everybody's there for the same reason to, to raise awareness about your stroke, and provide hope and encouragement and support.

Bill Gasiamis 48:47

Yeah, I think it's much needed. There's definitely a need for an abundance of books around stroke recovery, and from different perspectives in different parts of the world so that lots of different people can relate to that in a different way, because we're all unique in our own way. And I think the lack of resources available in this space, although that's changing pretty rapidly now.

Bill Gasiamis 49:17

The lack of resources in this space has been one of the hardest things for me, especially early on, when I was first recovering from the first blade and the

second blade. You know, nobody even told me, you know, there's a good book I've read about stroke or somebody I know has read a book about stroke or somebody I know has written a book about stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 49:41

There was no conversations at all about that, and the lack of places to go to learn about what had happened to me and how I'm supposed to deal with it or overcome it or whether there were other people going through. So similar things. That was really hard, because I searched and searched, maybe I didn't know what the right keyword searches were or whatever, I don't know. But I really didn't find any information that was tailored to somebody like me, it didn't feel like it.

Letisha Living 50:18

I totally agree with what you're saying. When I ended up on the stroke ward. It was just so I felt so disassociated. I was in this. And I'm not saying this to stereotype. But I never thought young people could have strokes. And here I am on a stroke board full of older people. And some of them were not doing as well as I was doing.

Letisha Living 50:44

And I just thought what is going on? Like, I just felt so disorientated disassociated, I couldn't connect with myself or my surroundings. And then I can't remember I was given some information somewhere, may have been in hospital, may have been through Vision Australia, I don't know where it was, but I did get some info. And it had old people on it. And I was like, this isn't even me. And, it just kept making me feel kind of worse, I guess. So I do hope that the book can bring some peace of mind to other young people who are going through it, that they can relate to it.

Bill Gasiamis 51:29

Yeah, I think it will, it'll bring at least possibilities for people to connect to a wide range of different people in one book in one publication, which is really good as well, because that's a lot of perspectives in one place. So you get a lot of a lot of bang for your buck. I suppose if somebody buys, I'm looking through the Insta. And in the Instagram page of it, which is finding yourself after stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 52:02

You've got some of the photos of some of the people who have contributed. And

it's just ridiculous how young some of the people are, you know, one of the young ladies is Beth, who was 19. She had a stroke. And then there's people from all walks of life in all different ages.

Bill Gasiamis 52:27

And seems like they've all had different types of experiences. With regards to stroke. Caitlyn collapsed when she was stepping out of the shower. Caleb was 24 at the gym. Brooke's husband heard her fall and dialled 911, Bob's stroke changed his life for the better.

Bill Gasiamis 52:51

So much really good information in there. And it's great. It's great that this book has come together and that you had this idea that wouldn't leave your head. So tell me about the fact that it wouldn't leave your head if it was something. Have you ever had an idea that stuck around for so long? What made it stick around for so long and not go away? What was so special about it or more important that you had to do it?

Letisha Living 53:25

Okay, so this is going to sound really woowoo and out there. But every time I thought about it, I got goosebumps. I was like that's it? I have to do it.

Bill Gasiamis 53:36

It's not that woowoo. That's pretty sounds pretty aligned.

Letisha Living 53:42

It was definitely in alignment for sure. Yeah. The name, everytime I thought about it Finding Yourself After Stroke boom, okay, that's it. I have to do this. I can't hide and not get my story out there. I was like, You're here for a reason you're here. You know, you survived this. You've been through these challenges. You've overcome these challenges.

Letisha Living 54:07

Now it's time to go and help others. Now it's time to get out there and lift people out of it and show them then a line show them that yeah stroke can change your life. But it doesn't mean the end of life, you can still have a very purposeful, meaningful connected life.

Buy The Book: Finding Yourself After Stroke



Bill Gasiamis 54:25

Yeah, I completely agree. How much is the book going to be available for what will sell for?

Letisha Living 54:33

In Australia \$30 Australian dollars. If you're outside of Australia, it's whatever the currency value is. So I think it works out to be about 20 to 22 US dollars. I don't know where it is elsewhere in the world, but whatever it is on currency dates, \$30 Australian.

Bill Gasiamis 54:53

Okay. So \$30 Australian, there's a hard copy that they can get and people can also get the ebook, and verbal is delivered instantaneously. Amazon will arrange the shipping and all the other stuff with regards to the hardcover. And if people want to go and get a copy of the book, they can go to a website as well? Can they go to a website? Or is it better just to go to Amazon and type in the name of the book, by the way, anyone listening, we're going to have all the links in the show notes. So you can go there quite easily. But in the event that you don't go to the show notes, where would they go to grab the book?

Letisha Living 55:38

So outside of Australia, or even in Australia, just go to Amazon. If you know one of the authors in the book go directly to them. If you don't, you can send us a message on Facebook, or Insta.

Bill Gasiamis 55:52

Fantastic. On that note, thank you so much for reaching out a couple of times. I know we had a great chat a couple of weeks ago. I'm glad you're feeling better after your bout with COVID was it?

Letisha Living 56:09

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 56:11

And you had to cancel at the last minute. I'm glad you're feeling better. And you're over that. And I really appreciate you coming on to the show.

Letisha Living 56:20

Thanks, Bill. Thank you for having me. I always enjoy talking to you.

Bill Gasiamis 56:25

My pleasure, absolute pleasure. And good luck with the book and good luck with future projects and with your ongoing healing and recovery.

Letisha Living 56:34

Thank you.

Bill Gasiamis 56:36

Once again, thanks for joining us on today's episode. To learn more about my guests including links and to download a full transcript of the entire interview, please go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes. If you'd like to support this podcast, the best way to do it is to leave a five-star review and a few words about what the show means to you on iTunes, and Spotify.

Bill Gasiamis 57:00

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Intro 57:32

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Intro 57:49

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Intro 58:18

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Intro 58:41

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