2 Years Of Hemorrhagic Stroke Recovery – Luka Jelusic

Hemorrhagic Stroke Recovery: A Comprehensive Guide to Rehabilitation

Introduction

Navigating the path to recovery after a hemorrhagic stroke is a critical journey that requires precision and dedication. In this guide, we delve into the multifaceted aspects of hemorrhagic stroke recovery, providing a comprehensive resource for individuals seeking insights into the rehabilitation process.

Understanding Hemorrhagic Stroke Recovery

Recovering from a hemorrhagic stroke involves a multifaceted approach that addresses physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects. Each stage of recovery requires a tailored strategy, emphasizing the importance of personalized rehabilitation plans.

Early Rehabilitation Measures

Physical Therapy

In the initial stages of recovery, physical therapy plays a pivotal role. Therapeutic exercises are designed to improve motor skills, balance, and coordination. The focus is on rebuilding strength and mobility, setting a solid foundation for further progress.

Speech and Language Therapy

For individuals experiencing speech and language difficulties post-stroke, speech therapy becomes an integral component of early rehabilitation. Therapists work on enhancing communication skills and addressing swallowing issues, fostering a

gradual return to normalcy.

Cognitive Rehabilitation

Memory and Cognitive Exercises

Hemorrhagic strokes can impact cognitive functions. Engaging in memory and cognitive exercises stimulates brain function, aiding in the restoration of cognitive abilities. This tailored approach contributes significantly to the recovery of mental acuity.

Emotional Support

Recognizing the emotional toll of stroke, rehabilitation programs incorporate mental health support. Psychologists and counselors play a vital role in helping individuals cope with the emotional challenges that often accompany the recovery process.

Long-Term Recovery Strategies

Adaptive Technologies

As recovery progresses, incorporating adaptive technologies can enhance independence. Devices and technologies designed to assist with daily activities empower individuals to regain control over their lives.

Continued Physical and Occupational Therapy

Maintaining a commitment to physical and occupational therapy beyond the initial stages is crucial. Regular sessions contribute to sustained progress, preventing regression and promoting long-term recovery.

Hemorrhagic Stroke Recovery Success Stories

Real-Life Testimonials

Sharing success stories of individuals who have triumphed over the challenges of hemorrhagic stroke recovery provides inspiration and encouragement. These narratives offer a glimpse into the possibilities of a fulfilling life post-stroke.

Conclusion

In conclusion, navigating the path to hemorrhagic stroke recovery requires a comprehensive and personalized approach. By addressing the physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects of rehabilitation, individuals can embark on a journey toward regaining independence and a fulfilling life. This guide stands as a beacon of support for those on the road to recovery, emphasizing the possibilities and triumphs that lie ahead.

The Interview

Luka Jelusic experienced a hemorrhagic stroke at age 46. Recovery has tested him in many ways and the experience has taught him a lot.

Highlights:

02:01 Introduction
03:18 What caused the hemorrhagic stroke
09:43 Hemorrhagic stroke symptoms
15:11 Dealing with mental fatigue
22:23 The neural superhighway in the brain
29:03 Managing family emotions after the stroke
38:23 Hand-brain connection and its impact on recovery
43:48 How handicraft helps with neuroplasticity
48:51 Lessons from the stroke
56:16 Time management

Transcript:

Bill Gasiamis 0:00
Hello, everyone. Thanks once again for tuning in to another episode of the Recovery after Stroke podcast. Before we get started, I want to address

something with you, that you may have noticed that is different about the show when you are listening on your favorite podcast app.

Bill Gasiamis 0:16
Because I have not yet been able to secure an appropriate corporate sponsor. To help cover the costs of the show, I have decided to switch on a feature offered by my podcast host, and that is to run advertising on some episodes before during, and after the interview. I do hope that they are not too distracting, and I would love your feedback if they are particularly if they are inappropriate or annoying in any way.

Bill Gasiamis 0:44
I have avoided switching this feature on for as long as possible. But because I have covered the costs for the show since 2017. And with the rising costs of keeping this podcast going, I have no other choice. I will be looking at ways to raise more funds shortly, which might include a version of the show which is a subscription base for those who prefer not to listen to ads, or perhaps a Patreon page.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12
But I will look at many different options and implement the ones that are best for me. And hopefully, they will be the best ones for the listener as well. The book is a perfect way of supporting me and the show while getting amazing value. And you can grab a copy of that by going to recoveryafterstroke.com/book.

Bill Gasiamis 1:33
Funds raised by the book already are helping to pay for some of the costs of the show. But we are a long way from being cashflow positive. The book tells the story of 10 stroke survivors and the steps that they took that got them to the stage in their recovery where from a personal growth perspective, stroke transformed into one of those life experiences that was on reflection, filled with many opportunities for growth and personal transformation.

Introduction – Luka Jelusic

Bill Gasiamis 2:01
Grab your copy today. This is episode 293. And my guest today is on the second year of his path to recovery after a hemorrhagic stroke. Luka Jelusic welcome to

the podcast.

Luka Jelusic 2:16
There you go. Thank you.

Bill Gasiamis 2:18
Thanks for being here. Tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

Luka Jelusic 2:23
Sure. So about two years ago, it was two years, just a few days ago, I had a hemorrhagic stroke, which affected me quite a bit. And actually after hearing your episode 267 with Angie Read I thought I might contact you and just share my experience with it because it was something with Angie's story that I could relate to in the way that she kind of what I understood, tried to just push through and kind of storm through or like forced the way to kind of getting better and that's often not how things work.

What caused the hemorrhagic stroke of Luka Jelusic

Bill Gasiamis 3:19
You're an interesting guy. Okay, because you're a woodworker, and woodwork is all precision and time and care. And you can't force the project to get it to the end because if you force it, it looks terrible, and nobody's going to buy it. You were 46 when you had a hemorrhagic stroke, what caused the bleeding?

Luka Jelusic 3:44
Ah, well, there is no clear the doctors suspected AVM but then after angiography they found no AVM so they said well basically it just happened. And I think I had like a reasonably healthy lifestyle when it comes to usual factors like I'm not a smoker I'm not a drinker. I'm not obese, I'm physically active, and so on.

Luka Jelusic 4:15
But I was in a very, very stressful period in my life. And I am not a doctor and the doctor said well stress can kind of contribute to but not cause a stroke. But I do know that I had a very very stressful period in my life three years before the stroke I divorced my wife and it was my older daughter who didn't take that quite well so I was quite worried about her.

Luka Jelusic 4:50
I had a stressful situation at my job a particularly stressful situation at work that drag for a couple of months also I entered a new relationship, which is now very stable and very supportive and great, but at that time were also several challenges there. So it was kind of this situation where you know, all the important areas, like if at least one of them is kind of good, you have somewhere to turn, you know if your job is a mess, but your relationship works, well then, you know, you kind of have a safe way there, but I felt quite a bit cornered. And at that point, and I'm sure that had a lot to do.

Bill Gasiamis 5:35
How do you respond to stress? Do you go quiet? Do you get loud and obnoxious? How do you deal with it when you're cornered? How do you respond?

Luka Jelusic 5:48
Ah, I think that I think I would say normally, like, kind of problem-solving is a part of my work. And I can tell you a bit about what I do as well. So thinking normally cope with these things fairly? Well, but at that point, I think I started to feel like, you know, I just did everything wrong. And I'm a complete failure, and I'm just making a mess all around me. And it was some kind of some kind of given up in that, like, I just, it just seemed like everything I did was wrong at that point.

Bill Gasiamis 6:32
And if you've done it, if you've had a couple of bad decisions, or things have gone wrong, or people are blaming you for things that have gone wrong, that may not even be your fault. You do tend to sort of say, Okay, well, maybe I'm going to stop doing anything, right now I'm going to stop making decisions, I'm going to stop taking action. And it seems like you're withdrawing, it seems like you're, you're not taking responsibility.

Bill Gasiamis 6:58
But in fact, I'm describing myself now. But in fact, what's happening is, sometimes when everything's turned to shit, the best thing to do is do nothing, and just wait until the wave passes over you and goes away. And then you can sort of reassess, and then start making decisions again, and start retaking action, and start testing the waters to see how things are going to go.

Bill Gasiamis 7:25

Now, in a difficult situation with people and in their relationships, you have to allow the other person to go through their process as well, their phase of how they deal with the terrible time. And if the two with different ways of dealing with a terrible, terrible time clash, then it can be chaos. And I feel like what you're describing is that you might have felt like you were you had no control over influencing the situation positively. And losing control was also absolutely making it worse.

Luka Jelusic 8:03
Absolutely. That's the the way I felt at that moment, like, like, I just couldn't figure out a way to like, make things better for me or other people around me. So I resonate with the way that you explain these things.

Bill Gasiamis 8:25
And especially what your children, when, when it's your children, you want to make it better for them all the time, you want to make sure that they're not hurting, that they're comfortable that they understand that they can appreciate your point of view that they respect your decisions, or that they can forgive you if you've made the wrong decision.

Bill Gasiamis 8:44
And children just don't play that game. They have their way of dealing with stuff and it might not be correct, because they may not also have the skills to correctly approach something that's bothering them. But it's the wrong time to charge both of them as well, isn't it? I mean, it's impossible. Yeah,

Luka Jelusic 9:06
absolutely. I mean, it's at some point, you also when it relates to children, that tendrils do other things as well, like you understand that you do live kind of in the long run, like you're gonna live from today from today to tomorrow. So there's a lot of learnings that happening today that are very useful at some later point in life. So often things are not what they seem in the moment, but you have to get there yourself, right? You have to kind of figure it out for yourself in a way.

Hemorrhagic stroke symptoms

Bill Gasiamis 9:43
And then when all this stuff is happening, it seems like the bleeding in the brain is

also a circuit breaker to all this stuff that happened personally. How did you first realize that there was something wrong? Did you get symptoms? What was it like?

Luka Jelusic 10:04
Yeah, yeah, I did. So in the days before the stroke, I was extremely tense. Just like there was some kind of tension that I felt in my body and some kind of spasms, which were not like the usual thing for me. And then it happened actually, when I was in the shower, which I heard is not completely uncommon. If you're in a long, warm shower, and if you have previously been tense, that can kind of cause a sudden change in your, blood temperature, pressure, and stuff.

Luka Jelusic 10:51
So I just felt that I almost fell in the shower. And I noticed that, like, my right leg doesn't hold me. And then I tried to grab myself and my right, arms didn't work. And I thought, Alright, there's something weird going on. But there was nothing with my vision. And you don't know much about stroke unless your doctor or your stroke survivor.

Luka Jelusic 11:20
But I thought, Okay, since like I see, on both my eyes, it's probably not a stroke, it's maybe something with circulation, whatever. So yeah, my partner took me to a local, small hospital and they said, Well, you probably had a small stroke, it's probably not too terrible. But you need to go to a bigger hospital and get checked. And then then it came to a bigger hospital.

Luka Jelusic 11:49
And then they started doing tests. And then they said, Yeah, you had a, you had bleeding in your brain. And we'll kind of keep monitoring you and see what's next. And then at some point, they said it stopped. So there's no like, further danger. And they, they they were kind of considering surgery, but they then decided not to do anything. And, and there was that.

Luka Jelusic 12:19
And then what happened was that I think it was like the second day I was in the hospital, I got sick with COVID and that didn't help. Thanks. Because what I heard from a doctor is that it's not a very scientific explanation, but I guess it kind of makes sense as COVID hits you where you're weak.

Luka Jelusic 12:44

And I just had a stroke. So that probably made the fatigue worse than if it was just from the stroke, because that's the thing that I struggled most with fatigue brain fog again, and confusion.

Bill Gasiamis 13:04
How bad is fatigue how much energy did you have to do things for say, the day?

Luka Jelusic 13:12
Well, I started initially, it was good, quite difficult. And actually, when I started now and then getting a good day, when I would feel kind of normal, almost normal. It was only then that I realized how extremely tired I was all the other time. So it was this kind of high point that made me realize, yeah, that that I am very different in the other times, so I spent three months of work.

Luka Jelusic 13:49
And then and then went back to work. And that was quite difficult. So I work primarily as a teacher at the university, I teach design and craft at two different schools. And what is kind of a big part of my work is so-called design-build projects or community participatory design-build projects.

Luka Jelusic 14:12
So I take a group of students it can be like 15 or 20 students somewhere to some kind of community, it can be like a small rural community or a hospital or something like that. We stay there for a month. And we design and build some kind of space for them. So it can be like an outdoor community garden or like an outdoor living room or something like that.

Luka Jelusic 14:38
And there's a beautiful project. It's a very meaningful thing to do. But it's also extremely intense, very kind of engaged with people with decision-making at many different levels, and so on. So that was the first thing I did after I returned to work. And that was quite quite challenging. I mean, I had help from colleagues as well. But it was quite a push to do that.

Hemorrhagic stroke recovery and mental

fatigue

Bill Gasiamis 15:12
Were you struggling with was it being getting clear information in knowing what to do? Was it in telling people? What steps to take? What are you struggling with the most?

Luka Jelusic 15:25
I think the most difficult thing is that intense social contracts are one of the things that wear me out the most. So, if I have like, whatever manual workshop task to do on my own, that's great. That's I don't have a problem with that. But intense social contact and intense settings with many people, airports, train stations, and something like that.

Luka Jelusic 15:54
It's like, it just sucks out the energy off me immediately, and computer work is kind of similar. But since the essence of these projects is kind of matching people and work desks and stuff, then just struggled with fatigue a lot in that.

Intro 16:17
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. How long will it take to recover? Will I recover? What things should I avoid? In case I make matters worse, doctors will explain things. But, if you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask.

Intro 16:42
If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation, stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you it's called Seven Questions to Ask Your Doctor about your Stroke.

Intro 17:01
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. Download the guide. It's free.

Bill Gasiamis 17:21
Yeah, very common. It's exactly what I suffered from other large crowds. So going to sports events was very difficult for me going to a noisy event where there were a lot of people at a bar, for example, and then the lighting and then the noise and then was just impossible. And then also finding a way to go back to work. I did some work in an office for about three years to try and get back on my feet.

Bill Gasiamis 17:58
I remember the first six months were terrible, I had to get anything done. And I was constantly fatigued. I would even leave and go into the car and have 10 minutes of quiet time or meditations or more to try and sleep just so I could recharge and come back and do the rest of the day. It was extremely difficult. And I drove an hour to work and an hour home. It was just such a massive day I was wiped out.

Bill Gasiamis 18:25
But what I found over the three years by the time it got to the last few months before I left the place, I was able to sit in front of a computer for eight hours and do some work, and participate in those conversations. I didn't need to take rest breaks, even though I would be quite fatigued and exhausted at the end of it, but didn't need to do what I was doing at the beginning of the job.

Bill Gasiamis 18:51
So it improves. But yeah, it does take some time. The hardest part for me was other people around me not appreciating what I was going through how did you find dealing with other people who you're working with? And how did they react and respond to you?

Luka Jelusic 19:12
Well, I have a very supportive partner, which helps me a lot in this especially since like, I don't know if you struggle with that, but it's gonna it was it took me quite a while to learn who I am right now and what are the things that wear me out and then what are the things that are that I should avoid and so on.

Luka Jelusic 19:39
But at work initially, I also felt just like you described like I didn't look it's just hard for people to understand. Like you kind of just expect automatically for someone to understand what stroke is about and all that. I mean that I guess

that’s why you’re doing what you’re doing.

Bill Gasiamis 19:59
We don’t want them to ever really understand, we don’t want them to know.

Luka Jelusic 20:07
Like, for real yeah, exactly. So I think that was the case initially at my workplace. Like, it wasn’t like, it didn’t come with a lot of, oh, maybe support or understanding. But I think it is way better right now. And I had just one month ago, a kind of a milestone, or like a breakthrough moment after a visit to a specialist doctor who had a lot of experience with strokes, and all sorts of neurological stuff.

Luka Jelusic 20:49
So after I like, kind of just tried to push through and kind of work my way through the recovery and all that, and that didn’t really, it just like it just started getting worse, also, so the, like, the memory issues, and fatigue, and all these things that get it, I had a feeling doesn’t prove, but it’s on the contrary, is getting worse.

Luka Jelusic 21:15
So then in October, I had to take like a 50% sick leave. Which helped me a lot, because I could balance work and rest way better. But it was a month ago that I had talked with specialists who for the first time explained, like the specific nature of the stroke that I had. Because I think one big issue for my recovery was that I kept hearing from doctors like, Oh, you have like a small bleeding so like, it’s not a big deal.

Luka Jelusic 21:54
And fair enough, but I just didn’t understand like, why am I so tired? And why do I struggle so much, and I kind of kept beating myself up, like, I should be better and you know, come on, just get your ass out of bed and go out and do your things and all that. And, then for some time, you can sort of take it like, alright, it takes some time to recover and all that but at some point, and it just, you understand you’re hitting your head against the wall.

The neural superhighway in the brain

Luka Jelusic 22:23

And it was this doctor who said you had a small bleeding that's correct. But you had at a very particular point in your brain. That's a part which is called an internal capsule, which he called the neural superhighway. So it's a kind of spot where old nerves from your body and the spinal cord pass through to the process in parts of the brain, and the other way around.

Luka Jelusic 22:51
So he said, If you had a real job in a factory, you wouldn't have like, you wouldn't feel a big difference from your life before. But we did executive function, like the planning tasks and the multi, multi-level decision making and all those things that are affected a lot. And that's why you have the consequences that you have. So even a small injury, to that part of the brain can have very serious consequences.

Luka Jelusic 23:25
And he said I had a patient that had a stroke at the same spot as you years ago, but a bigger bleeding. And he said things were not funny at all. Honestly, he said you can consider yourself extremely lucky. So that was kind of like a big, like, aha moment for me because it is like almost like Okay, so like what's happening? Like, it is kind of real, you know? So I think that explanation for the doctor, and then the same doctor called my boss at the university and explained to him what was going on.

Luka Jelusic 24:07
So from that moment on, I also had quite a different, understanding at my workplace of what was going on what a task I could do easily, and what tasks I should avoid. At least in the immediate future. So it was quite an important thing for me in terms of accepting what happened.

Luka Jelusic 24:33
You know, you read a lot about that, like the first step of recovery is actually to truly accept what happened. And I think for me, that was that moment and that kind of explanation from that doctor. Like against the thing that I've been hearing before, like, oh, we only had small bleeding so should be alright.

Bill Gasiamis 24:56
Yeah, it's place. They tried to keep you calm and not too concerned about it, etc. But they kind of playing it down. As far as I'm concerned, you hear about people having an ischemic, transient ischemic attack a TIA, and they call it a mini-stroke.

And I think it's the worst way to describe it like it's a stroke doesn't matter if it's Mini minor or major, it's a problem in your brain, and you have to take it seriously.

Bill Gasiamis 25:23
And I think it makes people not take the situation seriously, sometimes. I love the fact that you got this doctor to tell you specifically what impacted what part of the brain was impacted. That's why I have my FREE download of the seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke, people go to the recovery after stroke.com. Download it for free.

Bill Gasiamis 25:49
And then what they get is they get questions that they can go, a form that they can take to their doctor, and it has questions. And one of the questions is, Where specifically in my head is the damage? And what does that part of my brain do? And what hopefully that does is create a conversation that's very different from you had a stroke, you should go home and you should rest.

Bill Gasiamis 26:14
It's specific and the caregivers and the family members who are there, then specifically know what you're struggling with and why you're struggling with it rather than guessing. When I went to the hospital, I was told I had a bleed in the brain, it was near the cerebellum. But that didn't tell me what that impact was and what I should expect to be struggling with.

Bill Gasiamis 26:40
So everything that was happening, my wife and I were looking at each other going, is this normal? Is this what I'm supposed to be feeling? Am I having another bleed, we had no idea. And it made it uncertain. So we kept going back to the doctor, every time I've been to the hospital, every time something weird happened, or if I felt strange, who would strain in the hospital?

Bill Gasiamis 27:01
Because nobody explained anything to us. Most of the time we went to the hospital was a false alarm. But another two times the AVM bled again and wrote that up having brain surgery.

Bill Gasiamis 27:15
So what I would suggest is for people to get as much information as they can, if

they’re not certain what’s happening to them after the initial incident, and if something feels weird, definitely go and get a second opinion and go to the doctor. Don’t wonder don’t don’t guess. But don’t play it down. It’s a serious issue with TIA. A small bleed in the brain is a bleed in the brain.

Luka Jelusic 27:40
Yeah, I think that’s extremely important. Because it can it can be like the symptoms can be so different depending on where it happens. Knowing what are the kind of typical things for the spot where it happens, can be so helpful for the recovery. One thing that I read, because that later was that the doctor explained to me that I didn’t know when reading about it with that specific term, the internal capsule stroke, and like, it fits.

Luka Jelusic 28:15
Like silly little things like decision making is one thing that I noticed I have a very hard time making decisions. It can be like stupid decisions, but it’s like I just kind of make up my mind. And I feel like an idiot like wait a minute, it’s like, whatever situation starts a big deal. Just make up your mind, but I can’t. And that’s one of the symptoms of a stroke in that area. It’s quite helpful to just know that.

Bill Gasiamis 28:46
In that moment when you can make decisions, even simple ones, do you recruit other people to help you make the decision?

Luka Jelusic 28:53
Yeah if I can. I tried to ask for help if I could, depending on what is the situation.

Managing family emotions after the stroke

Bill Gasiamis 29:04
So you’re going through a difficult family time with your former partner and your daughter and you had the bleed, how did that impact them?

Luka Jelusic 29:16
Well on the one hand and again, I’m not sure if that’s the right thing to do but I think I really kind of desperately want to stay functioning kind of normally like to continue providing whatever not only financially ways but as well but also in all

the other ways. It's just like to kind of continue with the normal life as much as possible.

Luka Jelusic 29:55
And I think for the large part I managed but at quite a big cost in terms of fatigue, and also, in terms of like the cost of my private life, because if you're not the end of the week comes and you're completely, you know, you're a cucumber on a couch, so much of life, right. So I think that I guess that answers kind of the question because like, ultimately that does slow. Getting better in the long term, like pushing through and trying to do more than you can.

Bill Gasiamis 30:38
So are you trying to just pretend that you were, as you were before the stroke? Was that to try and make your daughter feel okay about the situation that was happening to you, because I kind of, was managing people's emotions a lot? So I found that leading up to surgery. I was cool as a cucumber, I pretended as well, even when I was worried that I wasn't worried about the surgery, because I knew everyone else around me was shitting themselves.

Bill Gasiamis 31:15
They were fearful about what was about to come. And to try and keep them calm. I pretended in certain situations that I was calmer than I was. Even though it was good for the surgery. I was trying to always keep other people relaxed, and calm. I was playing it down. Did you find yourself doing it? To sort of try? Definitely.

Luka Jelusic 31:39
Not with my not with my not with my partner? I think but with her, I was gonna, yeah. Not acting in or not playing. Like, I'm better than than I am. But in many other situations. And also, like, I know that in, in social situations in work. And all like, once I started getting tired, then most of the energy was spent on trying to look normal. And that says something stupid or not, you know, which which is, which is, which doesn't make sense at all, I should just kind of bailout and take a rest or whatever, leave.

Bill Gasiamis 32:26
It's so weird. But it's cool and I hear it a lot. People just want to just go back to the status quo, and then they can't, and then the gig is up, and they have to fall in a heap and hit rock bottom. And then they realize that they need to make some

dramatic changes. And then people go, Oh, my gosh, I didn't realize you were that unwell.

Luka Jelusic 32:52
Yeah. But there's something with, I heard you say that in one of the interviews, like, ultimately, you don't want to do things that got you in trouble in the first place. But I guess that's what a lot of us just do until we come to a certain point, which then I guess marks a turning point in recovery as well.

Luka Jelusic 33:16
And that's a point of acceptance of what happened and acceptance that you have to change things. And did you have to just go with what your body's telling you and all that? But until that point, I mean, I hear in light, like a lot of stories that your podcast and other things that I read that people just tried to kind of, yeah, just get back to the former self as soon as possible.

Bill Gasiamis 33:41
It's the worst one to go to because that's the one that caused the problems. It's the person who ended the situation. Like you. I was contributing to the bleeding occurring, by smoking, drinking, and working too much. Not resting enough not having any me time. I was angry. You know, I was blaming everybody for my problems. There was so much negativity in so many issues that I was creating that I was creating the perfect storm.

Bill Gasiamis 34:20
And this thing in my head just happened to be there. And I made the conditions perfect for it to go I've had enough and I'm gonna pop. And it was kind of like it's like a circuit breaker. It's what I mentioned earlier to you like for me, it was a circuit breaker. It was something that I look on now and think if it wasn't for that I may have succumbed to a different condition than what I had a heart attack.

Bill Gasiamis 34:48
Who knows you know, the smoking and the drinking water have contributed to something positive. So I see it as like this weird blessing in disguise Yeah, it was hard, though. I'm not saying it's easy. And I'm not promoting stroke it was button on. I'm now 12 years beyond the first bleed. And I look back at it and it wasn't for that maybe I would have suffered something more serious.

Luka Jelusic 35:19

Yeah, I understand. And I'm definitely, especially lately trying to see the good side of it, like the way that it's forcing me to change my life. There's there's a lot of good things about it. Now. And there's also, you know, I don't know if you saw it. There's a short documentary about Ram Dass, on Netflix, who had a stroke he's some kind of spiritual leader. So he had a stroke late in his life. And he says, this thing, which is a great sentence like, I don't wish you stroke. But I wish you the grace that stroke brings, which was quite profound.

Bill Gasiamis 36:08
The best lessons I've ever had to learn were profound, I can't, I couldn't have learned them any other way. And it's it's disappointing that I had to have a stroke to learn them. But I'm not sure if there was a way for me to learn them. I'm not sure how else I could have learned the lessons that they brought that abroad. It's really weird. So were you left with any deficits, other than the neurological challenges, were you left with physical deficits in your body?

Luka Jelusic 36:41
My right side is not as strong as it used to be. So I have good dexterity in my right hand. But there's a difference. So especially when I'm when I'm tired, then it's kind of kind of clumsy with it. But, but nothing else. Nothing apart from that. And also, I think, I think there's a number when it comes to like, again, it's something that ng read mentioned in your podcasts, like working with your hands is something quite important for the recovery.

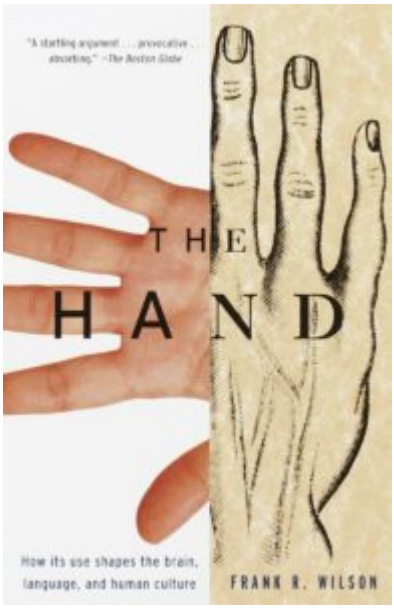
Luka Jelusic 37:30
I am teaching designed to craft with my students. So there's like this premise of the school, both schools that I work with is that design is not complete without the act of making. So wherever you design, you need to make it to understand the implications of it. So I'm both teaching design and design skills, as well as different making skills.

Luka Jelusic 37:56
But I noticed that that's something like since I could do less off kind of executive functioning than I started to turn both in the way I teach, but also in my hobbies and stuff, kind of coming back to the workshop and going back to making in different ways. But it's extremely beneficial for me.

Bill Gasiamis 38:23

I love that.

Hand-brain connection and its impact on hemorrhagic stroke recovery



Luka Jelusic 38:23
When I was younger, I was fiddling a lot with old cars. And then a little less than a year ago, I bought after quite a while I like I bought an old car, and 1968 car that needed a lot of work and fiddling with that thing for an hour or two per day. It does me good. Both in terms of kind of the like just the physical training of dexterity. There's something else that happens with that kind of work.

Luka Jelusic 39:04
And there's an excellent book, I don't know if you know about it, it's called The Hand by Frank R. Wilson. It's called the full title is like the hand and how its US shapes the brain and something else in human culture. So something like that. But in any case, Frank Wilson is a neurologist to kind of brought forth this hypothesis, that brain and hand evolved together.

Luka Jelusic 39:39
It was the evolution of our hand that affected the change in the developmental forebrain that ultimately enabled the appearance of language. So kind of the basic premise is that the hand and brain are like, intrinsically connected in very beautiful and sometimes unexpected ways. So there's something in that, like dealing with music, with crafts with these kinds of things I find extremely

beneficial for my recovery. And I heard that from other people as well.

Bill Gasiamis 40:16
Yeah, well, I'm from a Greek background. So most of our talking is done with our hands. If you're not moving your hands everywhere, you're not communicating, you know what I mean? And I struggle to be on the podcast and not use my hands. So I have to put them down. And because it's not efficient, the podcast.

Bill Gasiamis 40:41
But when you think about what you said, like when I think about it, instinctively. You, there's so much not in them so much that comes from the communication with hands like there is our gestures. Like, often, when somebody's talking emotionally about emotional stuff, they're pointing at their heart, you know, when they're freaking out in their head, their hands are near their head, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 41:09
And when something has, when you're gutted by something when something has happened, and you feel gutted. And you know, you're struggling with what just happened, you know, people are clutching their stomachs with their hands, it has their hands have a very significant role in nonverbal communication, you do see people's hands do all sorts of strange things.

Bill Gasiamis 41:34
And if you don't listen to people, if you're not listening to their words, and you're just observing their hands, it's amazing where their hands go and what they do. And if you think about what you said earlier about design, right, so there's one thing to do design an object and create a 3D render. And to be able to visualize it at the top, and the bottom is a certain amount of skills, a certain part of your brain gets activated.

Bill Gasiamis 42:04
And you're able to visualize that before you render, then you render it, then you see it, your visualizations come to life, but then to use your hands and to craft, the raw object, the raw piece of timber, and to fine-tune it and make it look, the way you intended is another next level of ability and skills and the hand has to play a role in every stage it has to play a role in the rendering has to play a role in the construction, it has to play a role in developing the form of the objects.

Bill Gasiamis 42:44

And you can see how if somebody only ever did design, it's like what they say about architects and builders, you know, architects they're fantastic. All they do is put drawings on paper, but they've never built a house, what would they know about installing a window, for example, it's kind of true, it's that you miss a big piece of the process if you're only involved in one step of the process.

Bill Gasiamis 43:14
And then the other step is done by somebody else. I think that designers and architects would be far better at their skill at their craft if they took a project from concept to result. Because then they're able to understand where in the design, they need to alter to make the construction easier, for example, and vice versa.

How handicraft helps with neuroplasticity

Bill Gasiamis 43:48
So I feel like your job of say designing a space or putting something together and then being involved in the project is helping your recovery because Neuroplasticity has to happen in far more places in your brain than in somebody who just did the design work and then handed that project over.

Bill Gasiamis 44:11
I was telling a friend of mine whose daughter recently had a bleed in the brain. She had an AVM when she was 17. At the time, she was doing well now. But she was a diver. So she's somebody who goes onto a board jumps up and then different heights, twists her body in the air, repositions at real lines, and then finds a way to land in the water to make the smallest splash possible.

Bill Gasiamis 44:43
When I was being told about the rapid pace of her recovery, I wasn't surprised to hear that because she has far more neurons in her brain that are related to movement and how to achieve I have an outcome with her body than I do, for example, She's 17, she's got that advantage as well.

Bill Gasiamis 45:07
But she also has this additional skill. And even though she's left with left-side deficits, numbness tingling, and proprioception issues, she still has all these other additional neurons that she can use to rewire the parts of her brain that were

impacted. And to give her more ways to bring back things that will last, because there are just more pathways there already. Unlike me, I never dived in my life.

Bill Gasiamis 45:44
So I'm kind of sitting behind the eight ball. And this is the thing about exercise as well, where what you do with your hands on the car, I consider a form of exercise. It's coordinating the brain, the hands, thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making, it's doing it all, all at the same time.

Bill Gasiamis 46:03
It's such, it's like a sport, it's like running around on a field and being physically fit. And then that's why it's so important to get into physical activity after a stroke. And it doesn't matter what level of deficits you have, what you're doing is you're creating so much Neuroplasticity, so much potential for change and rewiring.

Luka Jelusic 46:27
Definitely and at the same time, it can be on a level that is manageable and not kind of overwhelming. But like I guess, for the right kind of brain injury and for the right kind of person that can be like really life-saving for the recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 46:48
Yeah, and I encourage it, and I love what this book suggests that the hand and what did you say the which part?

Luka Jelusic 47:03
So I read quite a while ago, I mean, I read because of my work and not because of a stroke. But he hypothesizes that it was the evolution of the actual thumb, not the hand is a hole, but the way that our thumb evolved, compared to other primates caused our brain to rewire, which ultimately enabled the appearance of language and other things, which makes us different than other primates. So you can kind of like twist that idea. And like possibly use your hands as a way to reclaim parts of your brain.

Bill Gasiamis 47:49
I'm reading the title on Amazon, I just found that on Amazon, and the title is The Hand: How Its Use Shapes The Brain, Language, and Human Culture. So how many years has it been now since the first bleed since bleed?

Bill Gasiamis 47:51
Two years.

Bill Gasiamis 47:54
And has the blood clot gone away from the blood that was in your head?

Luka Jelusic 48:20
I guess? Yeah, I had the angiography, like two months after the stroke, as I mentioned before, where they tried to see if there was AVM that caused it or something. And they said, Yeah, it's like, it's all good with that, there's nothing more that we could do. So you should just kind of proceed with your whatever physiotherapy and stuff and like go on with your life.

Lessons from the hemorrhagic stroke recovery

Bill Gasiamis 48:51
Yeah, that's a good place to get to. What has stroke taught you?

Luka Jelusic 49:04
I think definitely listening to my body or listening to my body or listening to myself, whichever way you want to put it in ways that I didn't know how to do before and I'm still learning that big time. I remember when I was working with the physiotherapist I had quite an unusual and interesting person as a physiotherapist.

Luka Jelusic 49:31
So he told me, he gave me some exercises to do like in the gym, like walking in a straight line and whatever with support without support, one eye closed and stuff, but he told me you need to do things that are okay for you. That's, that's extremely important for you.

Luka Jelusic 49:54
Now you need to do what you're comfortable with. As Alright, and then we're doing this exercise and He tells me something, to do something where I almost fell. And he said, why did you do that? I said, you told me to say yeah, but I also told you that you need to do things that are good for you.

Luka Jelusic 50:18
And I remember that so many times, like, it doesn't matter if he told me to, do something on the line. If that does work with me, it was such a simple, simple kind of trick to prove like you moron, like you just did something that's not okay for you.

Luka Jelusic 50:36
And like you forgot it. So think that's a big lesson to say stop and think, Is this okay for me? Now or not, and like you said, yourself, like, it's kind of sad that it's a stroke that has to teach you these things. But I guess there was no other way for that.

Bill Gasiamis 51:05
to happen, no other way. Very comfortable describing myself as a thickhead, I have to learn the hard way. And there's no other way you can bring me to something gently and calmly and, and simply and it just doesn't work. My brain doesn't work like that. I have to get whacked over the head, so to speak. What was the hardest thing about a stroke for you?

Luka Jelusic 51:30
I think accepting the the new reality and accepting that life is not, you know, the life life and career and stuff. It's not like a straight line or a straight path. And some things just happen in a way that you didn't plan. Big time. Because, like about a year and a half, like roughly half a year ago, I was getting quite grim. Because the recovery just wasn't going the way I kind of taught it.

Luka Jelusic 52:10
So it's getting quite dark. In death and kind of, you know, just having these thoughts, alright, maybe I just won't be able to do what I kind of really like to do professionally and in other ways. And you know, all these thoughts like, who's gonna? Will I just stay alone will way have a job and I have a source of income? Will I have support from people? will it just be crippled that is not able to take care of himself and all these things? That can get quite tough.

Bill Gasiamis 52:51
Reasonable questions as well in the face of what has happened to you. They're very reasonable questions, and your identities getting challenged, and your future is uncertain. And yeah, I mean, I think everybody who's been in your situation has

asked themselves the same questions.

Bill Gasiamis 53:09
And I found myself waking up in the middle of the night and going to dark places, you know, when everything's quiet, and I've just gone to the toilet, and I need to go back to bed and I'm walking back to bed and then my brain just starts going everything shit, everything's terrible. You're never going to get through.

Luka Jelusic 53:31
The night is the worst man.

Bill Gasiamis 53:35
And I spoke to my psychologist about it and she told me there's a specific time in the middle of the night it's roughly between one and three in the morning or four in the morning. If you were in the middle of the night. It's called the witching hour. The witching hour now I've heard of it before and I was like and what happens during the witching hours you guys dumbshit stuff that shouldn't be thinking you start thinking and then you can cause a loop in a cycle it's very common of the negativity.

Bill Gasiamis 54:08
And if you know about it, just tell yourself you're woken up during the witching hour and you're just playing the unnecessary loop in your head and you can just forget about it and go back to bed and then wake up in the morning and you'll see things are different and that's what I try to, I try and do that because my head never used to do that. That's exactly

Luka Jelusic 54:35
That's exactly what you described that hour and the certain kinds of thoughts that don't normally appear during the daytime do appear that time and then they kind of mess up with you. But what I did find out is that that is extremely helpful, and I heard you talk about similar things. Are there good routines and good rhythms of things, and practices like meditation and journaling?

Luka Jelusic 55:10
And for me like, like, it's extremely helpful for me to make a plan for every day, and then try to stick to it. And then if it works, it's good. And then if I blow it, I kind of blow it, but it's really good if I can stick to it, for example, not work more than two hours, in one go to work two hours, have a little break, then work more.

Luka Jelusic 55:40
And yeah, like doing a meditation every morning, journaling every morning, no screens in the evening, which was kind of difficult to stick to. But if I manage that, that helps me a lot. So kind of trying to develop good discipline around things that I know are helpful. That then also helps with having good sleep and not going to those dark places at night.

Time management

Bill Gasiamis 56:15
Yeah, I used to just be happy that I had enough energy to cook dinner for the family. When I was home alone. My wife was back at work and the children were at school, I would do nothing all day, just so that I had enough energy to go by the ingredients and cook dinner and make sure that we ate dinner together. That was it. And if I did that, I achieved my goals for the day, and I was happy.

Bill Gasiamis 56:48
And then as things started to improve, I found myself getting through some heavier days of work. So getting to the point where you know, that list, I made it a bit larger. And then by the time I got to three o'clock, I'd be wasted. And then there would be say, four or five or six things that are still on the to-do list. And I just knew they were not getting done.

Bill Gasiamis 57:15
That's it under no circumstances, is it possible for me to sit down and do that, because if I do those things, I'm going to suffer for it tomorrow, or I'm going to not rest before bed, and I'm not going to get a good night's sleep, and it's going to be terrible. So I got good at feeling comfortable with saying, tomorrow's another day, the list is still going to be there. I'll just do it tomorrow. Instead of trying to get to the bottom of the never-ending list.

Bill Gasiamis 57:44
I mean, the list of tasks never ends. And it's like, Alright, that's it. We're done. We're done for today. And if somebody contacted me and said, for work, especially. And so what about this? What about they'll be like, Yeah, can't do it right now it has to happen. You have to wait.

Luka Jelusic 58:02

Exactly. But I think that was quite I assumed I was also quite learning for you at some point. But I know it was difficult for me because you know, at some point, you can have a feeling that you move through life because you don't leave things for another day.

Luka Jelusic 58:19
But you do them, you do as much as you can you make good use of your time, and you do as much as you can in one day and not leave things for tomorrow. Because at some point, you just assume you have more or less unlimited sources of energy, especially when you're young and all that. But then, after a stroke, it's just a different distribution of resources.

Bill Gasiamis 58:47
And it depends on what the most important thing to you. So you can still allocate time to the most important things to help you move through time and achieve your outcomes. And it's good at teaching you that that's not that important. You don't need to do that right now. And you can let that go.

Bill Gasiamis 59:05
And you could constructively use that time by doing nothing. For me, it was very constructive to do nothing, because that meant I rested, recharged my batteries felt better, and was able to interact with my family. That was all positive things. So doing nothing became very constructive. Very. You came a task that was useful to do, which I didn't realize.

Luka Jelusic 59:37
Yeah, exactly. Yeah. This is a different kind of prioritization.

Bill Gasiamis 59:44
Less is more and that's a good lesson to learn less is more especially when you have to use the energy in your battery efficiently and gently because you only get so many lines of battery for the day. Once they're done, they're done. That's it. The next day is another day we'll, we'll reassess and go again. What would you like to tell other stroke survivors who are listening to this quite early on in their recovery, perhaps, or they've been going through for a little while? What's your one piece of advice or encouragement that you'd like to give?

Luka Jelusic 1:00:29
Well, funnily enough, I heard that early on, and somehow, like, it just doesn't get

to you until it gets to you. But since my mom is a doctor, and she worked with some stroke patients in her practice, she said, you mustn't get fixated on becoming who you were, before the stroke as soon as possible, but to understand that you can also be someone else and that's okay.

Luka Jelusic 1:01:00
And I kind of understand that now. And although I heard it, I was told that right after the stroke, but it's just a different thing, if you, you know, have kind of intellectual understanding of something or like if you understand something in your body and kind of in your bones. But I think that's the most important thing. Like you don't necessarily have to get back to who you were before. You were someone different. And that can be a beautiful thing.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:33
Your essence is the same. But how you go about participating in the world or responding to how the world is, can evolve is an evolution? How would you describe it?

Luka Jelusic 1:01:40
Yeah, I'd say so. And you know, how the spiritual teachings tell you that letting go of things, or accepting what is is super important to move through life. I would say that. Once you take that in, that's when a stroke can become the best thing that ever happened to you, like you say.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:34
On that note, thank you so much for joining me on the podcast.

Luka Jelusic 1:02:38
Welcome, Bill. Thanks a lot for what you're doing. I so immensely appreciate it. It extremely helped. It was extremely helpful to me on this journey to listen to many episodes of your podcast. I appreciate it immensely.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:54
Thanks for joining us on today's episode, get a copy of my book about stroke recovery from Amazon, or go to recoveryafterstroke.com/book. To learn more about my guests, including links to their social media, and to download a transcript of the entire interview, go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:15

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Bill Gasiamis 1:04:09
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