

# How A Sub-thalamic Hemorrhagic Stroke Cured My Anxiety - Mali Torres

**Mali Torres was anxious about everything until one day she had a Sub-thalamic hemorrhagic stroke which had a positive side effect of curing her Anxiety for good.**

Instagram

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## Transcription:

Bill Gasiamis 0:00

What were you anxious about?

Mali Torres 0:03

Everything. I mean, just I had what I would think would have been diagnosed had I ever gone in. As general anxiety, I was afraid that leaving my kids something would happen to them. I didn't start driving until I was about 30 years old. Because I was afraid of hurting people. I was afraid of being in an accident. I was very nervous about a lot.

Intro 0:40

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

Bill Gasiamis 0:53

Hello, and welcome to another episode of the Recovery after Stroke podcast. Recently, Spotify released a new feature that allows people to rate their favorite shows similarly to how the Apple podcast app allows it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08

So if you think that the Recovery after Stroke podcast with yours truly Bill Gasiamis deserves it, I'd love it if you left the show a five-star review. This will help the show rank better on search engines and help newly diagnosed stroke survivors find the show and it could make a massive difference in their recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 1:28

Just like you needed something to help guide you and to help make you feel like you're not going through this alone. When you were diagnosed. Newly diagnosed stroke survivors will also benefit from knowing that there is a podcast out there where they can listen to the stories of other stroke survivors.

## Introduction



Bill Gasiamis 1:48

So go to your favorite podcast app and share what the podcast means for you. I would appreciate it and new stroke survivors finding the podcast will appreciate it. Now, this is episode 184. My guest today is Mali Torres, who experienced a sub-thalamic hemorrhagic stroke at age 47, which had the positive side effect of curing the debilitating anxiety that she lived with most of her life. Mali Torres, welcome to the podcast.

Mali Torres 2:21

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 2:24

Yeah, you're welcome. Thank you for being here. Tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

Mali Torres 2:30

Well, December 2020 was November 30, like the last day of November, after a great Thanksgiving. We had gone out of town to Northern California, which is beautiful. All woods and full of nature.

Mali Torres 2:55

I came home. I had been having headaches for quite a while I'm now realizing. And so November 30, I was getting my husband ready for work. He's a nursing assistant. At the time he was working nights.

Mali Torres 3:21

So getting him ready helping him get ready for work and his first day back to work after vacation. And so I sent him off and got ready for bed. And I fell and I remember not that we have a giant house with quite a small house. But I remember falling in the doorway between my kitchen and living room.

Mali Torres 3:53

And thankfully my younger son was home and heard me fall. I had fallen by the couch which was probably 20 feet behind me. I remember telling myself I was having a stroke because I knew from reading I'm an avid reader I knew the signs of stroke. There was no reason I should have fallen where I did how I did.

Mali Torres 4:33

But my husband told me that he was the one who told me I was having a stroke. So who knows, you know, memories are always weird.

Bill Gasiamis 4:41

Especially when you're having a stroke.

Mali Torres 4:44

Yeah. So I don't remember being afraid at all. I don't remember my husband being there. My son had called my husband back from work because he only

worked probably 10, maybe 15 minutes away from us.

Mali Torres 5:10

So very close. So he was at work already signing in and getting his patients ready. And he said I gotta go, you know, my wife's been in trouble. I gotta go. So he came home and by then the ambulance and everybody all the medical was here.

Mali Torres 5:35

And so yeah, they came in and I was on the floor and I had a hemorrhagic stroke on my left side, so I'm affected on my right side. But yeah, my husband said that I looked like a very sad gorilla sitting on the floor, and just very sad and apologized to him.

Mali Torres 6:17

And which is I'm very, usually very clumsy. So I guess I was telling him, I was sorry for falling again. And yeah, so they ended up taking me. I live in I guess, a suburb. We call it the hood of Los Angeles. And so about here, we go by time, so 15 minutes outside of downtown Los Angeles City.

Mali Torres 6:59

But they took me to a wonderful hospital, in Long Beach, California. And they're very well known for their stroke care. So thankfully, because I got some amazing, amazing doctors, and amazing nurses, the whole staff was just amazing. So my husband was able to meet me there and there started my journey.

Mali Torres 7:30

You know, it was something that I didn't ever think would happen. You know, none of us do. But I was there for probably I think it was a month and a half that I was in the hospital. So as of right now. Exactly a year ago, I was still in the hospital. So it's been crazy.

Bill Gasiamis 8:02

It's very fresh, isn't it?

## **Stroke Cured Anxiety and Depression - Mali Torres**

Mali Torres 8:04

Yeah, it's I've never been afraid of it. I've never been you know, angry. Because I

have met quite a few stroke survivors that are angry, and bitter, and why me? And I've never done that. You know, and like I told you the way we started with during the interview I have suffered from anxiety and depression since a very early age.

Mali Torres 8:45

I can remember being in first grade just riddled with anxiety, missing school days, many days. And as I grew up, I became of all things a hairdresser. Which, you know, meeting people all the time, that's not something you would think somebody with anxiety would do.

Mali Torres 9:15

But I love art, I love to create I love to you know, make people feel good. And that was a good thing with hair. But I remember having to convince myself to stop the car, I would leave an hour before my appointments. So I could put myself up to go to work.

Mali Torres 9:42

Even though these were people who wanted me there, you know, my anxiety was so bad that I couldn't do it. I was gonna go see friends. I couldn't do it. I canceled constantly and when I finally, like, not just woke up, but realized where I was in the hospital I realized I didn't have that anymore.

Bill Gasiamis 10:18

That's very cool before you go into that part of it because that's everyone's going to be interested to hear about that. But what were you anxious about?

Mali Torres 10:28

Everything. I mean, I had what I think would have been diagnosed had I ever gone in. As a general anxiety. I was afraid that leaving my kids something would happen, to them. I didn't start driving until I was about 30 years old. Because I was afraid of hurting people. I was afraid of being in an accident. I was very nervous about a lot.

Bill Gasiamis 11:14

So it's fear based it sounds like.

Mali Torres 11:19

I think so. But even with people, even with situations, it was just a general anxiety. And it was very debilitating, I guess you could say because they would

stop me, and there were times that I would cancel appointments. Because I couldn't make it to work. Because I was shaking in my car. I had to stop my car, and I'd have to come home.

Mali Torres 11:54

Because I'd be just so nervous about everything. You know, and these, like I said before, these are people that I knew that were there because they liked my work. And still, it was very difficult, very difficult. So now, you know, along the same lines, even going out with friends, people I had known, you know, for 20 years, it was very difficult for me, I would cancel, you know, oh, we were going to go to a club, but I couldn't do it.

Bill Gasiamis 12:40

Why couldn't you do that? Because the club sounds like it was fun. You couldn't have hurt somebody at a club, could you?

## **Drugs and Alcohol - Mali Torres**

Mali Torres 12:47

No, I just would get so anxious and so nervous. I can't even explain it, I would be shaking. And unfortunately, because of all my anxiety in my teens, I dealt with it with our goal. I had a big problem with alcohol so I quit drinking before our legal age of drinking.

Mali Torres 13:34

You know, so then, unfortunately, I started doing, you know, doing drugs. And it was all to cope and get rid of that part of myself. Because it was such a difficult part. You know, I couldn't do, I couldn't function. I wasn't functioning at all I should have been to the doctor.

Bill Gasiamis 14:04

Yeah. Yeah. Did it help at all? Was it helping? Were the drugs achieving what you intended?

Mali Torres 14:13

That was my problem, they did. So it was you know, that's how I kind of justified it. You know, okay, well, you know, I'm okay, I can go and I would talk to people and I wasn't myself. But they were hurting me physically, hurting me mentally, emotionally.

Mali Torres 14:38

So it wasn't a good thing. So thankfully, I stopped. You know, because yeah, I would look in the mirror and I didn't recognize myself, you know? So I didn't want that anymore. So when I met my husband I completely quit. I quit it all.

Bill Gasiamis 15:03

But you still had the anxiety?

Mali Torres 15:06

I did. But once I met him you know, people talk about like, the whole soulmate thing. And he was my other half, he became that what I could depend on, and he took that place, you know, he helped me a lot. And he helped me to get back in the world to you know, experience other stuff.

Mali Torres 15:44

But I still had anxiety I still had even that depression, you know, it was just my whole life, you know. And once I had kids because we have two boys, I put all of my energy into being a mom, and that was kind of taking the place of the alcohol and the drugs, and it was always something else that took my mind off of it, you know, thankfully, a healthier way.

Bill Gasiamis 16:28

So now that it's gone. Okay, I'm gonna give you my version of what I think happened, and why it's gone. Okay, but maybe I'm completely wrong. And that's okay. Because I want to prompt the conversation about it. Is it possible that the stroke interfered with all the connections, the ones that created anxiety?

Bill Gasiamis 16:50

Because anxiety is it's kind of like a learned behavior, you get anxious about one thing, and then you get anxious about the next thing. And the pebble starts to create a lot of neural pathways, they create neuroplasticity to make anxiety happen. And they get better and better at it, they practice it so much, they just get better and better at it.

Bill Gasiamis 17:11

And then they don't know how to unpractice it, and how to get rid of those pathways. Do you feel like the stroke perhaps, firstly, do you relate to that? And then secondly, did that also interfere do you feel like it did interfere the stroke interfered with those pathways and made them stop working or something?

Mali Torres 17:34

It feels like it, it feels like, you know, there is a part of our brain that dies. And I feel like that's the part that did that like something completely gotten away, you know, and, that was supposed to be out, let it out.

Mali Torres 17:56

You know, because now I can talk to people, I would never have done this interview before ever, you know, like I'm a naturally shy person. But shyness is completely different than anxiety.

Mali Torres 18:17

Because shy is just being you know, a little hesitant here and there. But anxiety is very difficult. It's a difficult way to live. And believe me, there's no one tough you know, would willingly have anxiety, you know, because unfortunately, I do know other people that have anxiety and how depression and the same thing, you know, it limits your life.

Mali Torres 18:51

And they have seen the difference and maybe been asked what did you do? How to get out of it. And that's like, unfortunately, I had a stroke. So I wouldn't recommend this way to anybody. But yeah, it has to be something it has the stroke took away so much negative, you know, and it's great that first of all, I love that I can be here to talk that I survived it.

Mali Torres 19:35

Because you know, I do know even since my stroke a friend of mine lost her uncle to stroke and then we've seen celebrities lately that you know, have died from stroke. And that's all you hear is, you know, people that pass and so to be here to be able to You learn about it, know about it. And, be happy about surviving it.

## **Deficits from Sub-thalamic Hemorrhagic Stroke**

Bill Gasiamis 20:09

It's when you're when you were in the hospital, what did you have to overcome? Did you have deficits that you had to recover from as well?

Mali Torres 20:18

Honestly, yes. I don't remember the very beginning, in my first three weeks I have maybe three memories from three very quick memories. And it was more like the



nurse's station and the view outside of my window.

Mali Torres 20:48

But I was told that I had speech therapy, which I had to learn how to eat again, I had to learn to just, I mean, to swallow to talk, clearly again. It didn't take as long as some people have seen. But yeah, It took a while, it took a while, even after I did kind of, I guess wake up to where I can remember things happening.

Mali Torres 21:34

My speech therapist would come to the room. And she'd have me read three or four lines of a paragraph. And then put the stuff in order. And one of my first memories in there was just being so sad that it was taking me so long. Because I'm an avid reader. I love to read.

Mali Torres 22:08

I mean, I've read Lord of the Rings, three times, and even once is difficult. I am on my 13th time of reading the Harry Potter series. I joke with friends that I've donated more books than most people have read.

Mali Torres 22:30

So for me not to be able to read a few lines and put it together, It was scary, it was really scary that I wouldn't get that back. But thankfully, since I've been home now I've read, I think it's six full books. And that for me, that's a slow year.

Bill Gasiamis 23:00

So it's only been 12 months. Did you have any of those moments? I know, you said you didn't go to the Why me? But did you have any of those moments where you considered all of the negative side? I might not be here. This might mean this and this. Did you go there at all?

Mali Torres 23:21

I did. Because I think that to not think about it. You can't appreciate what you do have and what you've come back from. And I do that quite a bit. Actually. I read a lot of stories, I listen to a lot of stories. I listen to all the podcasts. And actually, yours was the first podcast that I could listen to I was never able to listen to them before.

Mali Torres 23:53

I never enjoyed them before. And then I found yours. And I was hooked. Believe

me. So then that led me to a few others. And so yeah, I reflect constantly, because I'm reminded, you know, I'd like to remind myself where I could have been, where I have been, and where I am.

Mali Torres 24:24

And it's because I kind of tend to forget, because I have memory issues too, but I kind of take life for granted no matter what, you know. So I like to remind myself that you know, I almost wasn't here anymore. You know, I came very close to not being here anymore.

Bill Gasiamis 24:55

It's very human to take things for granted and it's fair enough. We don't always have to think about the possibility that stuff's gonna go bad. But a reminder every once in a while, that's okay. I think that just lets you appreciate amazing things that are happening around us that we can see otherwise.

Bill Gasiamis 25:13

I mean, I was like, you, I didn't go to the negative side of it too much. But I did become aware that I was gonna die one day. And that was the first time that it happened. So I was like, you know, so I did what I had to do to make things right, by the people that needed, that I needed to make things right by and to adjust my behavior, and to be a better version of myself and to apologize, and to do all those things.

Bill Gasiamis 25:45

So it was helpful like that. Then I realized that if I don't do those things, and I'm not around anymore, then I won't be able to do them. And that's no good, I have to do those things.

## **Mali Torres Life Without Anxiety And Depression**



Bill Gasiamis 25:58

And it kind of made me speed up my idea of when I should do those things, or when I should take responsibility for those things. And that's kind of how I went about it. So now that anxiety has gone from your life, How has life changed? What is different about life?

Mali Torres 26:25

I get out more I see more people because I've always loved being at concerts, and little shows and music are big on our family. And my husband's musician on the side. And a lot of our friends are musicians. And yeah, it's kind of funny, because we live in LA. So all these musicians, right?

Mali Torres 26:59

But we do have a lot of people that would play music and a big thing for me and my husband is going to shows. And it used to be that I made excuses, not to go to the small shows and, you know, be in like around people. And now it's like, let's go, let's go, let's go, you know, I can't wait to go to the shows and practices and meet new people.

Mali Torres 27:29

And, you know, we're both meeting people who have been in the music business for a very long time. I met one of my favorite drummers through my husband, you know, my absolute favorite band is Jane's Addiction. And I met the drummer, and I'm just like, she knows, my husband takes pictures because he's an awesome photographer.

Mali Torres 28:00

And it's, you know, my husband's best friend, now is the basis for a band called Fishbone. That's been around forever. And so we sit and we'll talk to these people. And before, there's no way I would have been just like, alright, I'll be in the car. I'll be over there. I'll be you know, in the corner. I'll be you know, I'll be out of the way.

Mali Torres 28:29

And now it's like I get in these conversations. And people will ask, you know, these people that have been around the world 20 times 30 times and, you know, performed in front of 1000s, hundreds of 1000s of people. And I finally can see them for who they are. And that's regular people who are making music.

Mali Torres 29:01

And I have no, like, they'll ask me, Hey, you want to go meet this? And this? And of course, let's go. And before there was no way there was like, I'd make an excuse. Oh, I'm not feeling good today, you go ahead, go ahead, I'll be over here. And now it's a very freeing experience.

Mali Torres 29:27

I can enjoy life now. It's when people say you're reborn after a stroke. I get that. I totally that it feels like it. You know, because you don't just get another chance. You see life a whole other way. And it's you get to tell people about that and share your story. And it's been good, it's been good. And yeah, I have my deficits. And, you know, I started therapy yesterday because I've been having problems with my throat since the beginning.

Mali Torres 30:23

But with COVID, getting rehab is difficult. You know, they used to do it before COVID. It was the three types, it was physical, occupational, and speech therapy, all in the same day, you know, three hours of recovery every day, like it was in the hospital. And now it's not, because you know, everybody has to be separated, and they don't do group stuff anymore.

Mali Torres 31:02

They don't you know. So now I'm just starting. Because I have this thing. It's called a PVFM. It's, it has to do with the vocal cords and everything. So you'll notice sometimes it gets a little scratchy, But yeah, so that's helping me. I get a little off track, sometimes.

Bill Gasiamis 31:32

It's all relevant. I was curious. You had a hemorrhagic stroke? Did you have surgery to resolve that? How did it resolve?

Intro 31:42

If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you will know what a scary and confusing time it can be. You're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind. Like now long will it take to recover? Will I 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 32:06

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 [recovery after stroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com) where you can download a guide that will help you it's called the seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke.

Intro 32:26

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

Mali Torres 32:45

Know thankfully, I did not need surgery. I did have a drainage tube. It was right in here. They had to shave my head completely because my hair was down to the middle of my back completely shaved. And yeah, I had a tube and they drained all the excess liquid. And it was fine. Thankfully I didn't need any surgery. But yeah, it was a hemorrhagic stroke. And it was because of high blood pressure for too long.

Bill Gasiamis 33:29

Were you aware that you had high blood pressure?

Mali Torres 33:33

I had I wasn't aware because our healthcare system is horrible. So getting health care wasn't, you know, easy in our situation. And so I wasn't always at the doctor, I just, you know, few motions here and there and headaches would go away. Not realizing it was my blood pressure causing it.

Mali Torres 34:05

At the time I was even thinking of going in for possibly like migraine, you know, like asking a doctor about migraines. And so had I maybe been going to the doctor for blood pressure or to check and to be checked out? Maybe they would have thought like they would have diagnosed it earlier. But no it took having to go in first.

Bill Gasiamis 34:41

So was it maybe your anxiety stopping you from going and getting help?

Mali Torres 34:47

Yeah, I think a little bit of the anxiety because I had anxiety and depression and it was you know, I take care of my kids first, take care of everybody before myself. The whole mom syndrome, you know, it's the everybody else comes first. You know, I'll take a few pills, and I'm good.

Mali Torres 35:17

Keep going, just keep going. And being Hispanic. It's, yeah, yeah. Here it just is. It is. I remember listening to when you talked to you interviewed Joe Borges. Yeah. And he said the same thing. And I so like, I get that. I get it. Because it's true.

## **Common Cultural Treatment Practices**

Mali Torres 35:44

It's the, you know, our cultural joke is, when you're sick, it's go do the boil, which is chicken soup, Vicks Vapor Rub, Seven Up, You know, and like our blanket, and there's a certain blanket that we have that has like animals on it and stuff. And everything will go away. And that's all we did. And that's, unfortunately, something that it's widespread.

Bill Gasiamis 36:23

I relate to all of those things that you said, not the colorful blanket. But, it's a great way as well, exactly, you know, make the kid a soup, and lie down, get the lemonade, because it's easy to swallow or something. I don't know why the lemonade. And, most of those things get solved like that.

Bill Gasiamis 36:45

And, you know, when you come from a community, like a village in the middle of Greece, or I'm not sure where your ancestors were from, or where your family's from, but that sometimes is all they had. So that's all they could do. So they did their best. And it worked, because most of the time, it wasn't a near-death experience that people were having.

Bill Gasiamis 37:12

Most of the time, it was something that was going to pass anyway. But that has created this thing of, like, well, these are the resources that we had "They worked for us, they'll work for you, too". And they're teaching that to the next generation because that's just what happens.

Bill Gasiamis 37:34

But I can relate to what you're saying. 100% and Joe was also somebody who had a stroke because of high blood pressure. And he was also, I think, not diagnosed or wasn't aware of it or something like that.

Mali Torres 37:57

Yeah, cuz like he then said, the reason I, like so identified with him was because he would just push it back, you know, take some aspirin or something and get on with life. And that hit because I was like, that's exactly how we were raised, you know, just take something for it. And keep going. Just, you know, put it in the back of your head.

Bill Gasiamis 38:32

Yeah. Joe's episode 98 on my podcast, I think it was quite a while ago, but it's available for anybody listening who might want to listen to that episode, just go to [recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes](https://recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes) and scroll down the list and you'll find the episode that has his name on it, how high blood pressure resulted in stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 38:55

And yeah, I know what you're saying. But also, I feel like a lot of it's got to do with it's not going to happen to me the whole it's not going to happen to me written you know, it's nothing serious. That's happening to me, I can just take minor steps or action.

Bill Gasiamis 39:18

But how can you know, I mean, most of the things that we go through are minor. So it's logical to relate this next thing that's happening is also being minor. Rather than always thinking about the possibility that it's far every one of them is going to be a near-death experience.

Mali Torres 39:41

And I should have been more concerned with my house because, you know, I had when I was 19 I had my gallbladder removed emergency surgery because it had gotten so inflamed. Then when I was almost 30, wait, let me see No, I was 32. And I had my second son through, an emergency C-section.

Mali Torres 40:20

Because he was two months early, and not that you could tell anymore, boys bigger than I am. He's tall and thriving, thankfully. So you would think that that I

would like, want to be at the doctor's and take care of everything, and it just still had the WAM complex, you know, that. Just I got to take care of everybody, but I thought, I'm okay, I'm good. I'm good, you know.

Mali Torres 40:53

So it was never that, you know, they tell you in a plane crash that takes put your air first, and then your kid's. My thought my first thought was always my kids, always my family, always my mom and my dad. And, you know, I lost my father, six and a half years ago to cancer, lung cancer.

Mali Torres 41:20

And I was his main caregiver, you know, I took him to his doctor's appointments, saw all his scans, all the, you know, everything, helped him with his paperwork helped him with everything. And so again, I was his caregiver, and then, once he passed, I became my mother's caregiver.

Mali Torres 41:53

My mom is now going through dementia, you know, and me and my husband are her caregivers. And, you know, so it's always been that take care of everybody else, you know.

Mali Torres 42:12

And so just, life was almost like, Alright, you're gonna stop. And if this is the only way we're good at that you'll sit and think about yourself then this is it pretty dramatic. A little bit a little bit, you know, but it's almost like, because, you know, people told me you should take a break, take a vacation. And it's it was just never in me. It was never in me to not take care of others.

Bill Gasiamis 42:51

And now what's it like now? Because it sounds like you've had a shift. And you are putting yourself first and are you doing me time are you having even though you're having to care for your mom? Are you doing me time?

Mali Torres 43:05

I am I actually will stop during the day I meditate. I am doing more yoga. I woke up extra early, so I could have coffee with no one else. Just sit and watch the sunrise. And you know, put it on the news later on. And just that quiet time. And you know, just like I don't even think about what I have to do for the day. I just think about it right now. And I never did that before. I never knew how to do that.



Bill Gasiamis 43:51

Sounds like you're present now to present, you're mindful whereas before your mind is always on something outside. But now it's like now.

Mali Torres 44:05

Yeah, yeah. I never understood how people could calm themselves so much. To do that, too. You know, you always heard about the people who did yoga and the people who meditated and were in the present moment. I didn't know how I had no clue.

Mali Torres 44:30

Because I had my day, my week, my month my year planned. Okay, I was everybody's planner. I was my family's. We didn't have a book. We had mom. So now it's my calendar. I write in my calendar. I write I put stuff in my phone, but I was able to let my kids take their roles for themselves. So it worked for everybody. You know, my kids learned. I mean, they've always been quite helpful.

Mali Torres 45:23

Wonderful kids, amazing boys. strong, smart, inventive. But it was always Mom where is this? Mom where is that mom, you know, is this ready and now it's, they do their laundry, and they're cleaning and yard work and animal care and all that stuff that I did for them. They learned how to do it themselves.

Mali Torres 45:51

And it's, so it's been beneficial for them too, you know, and which I'm proud to see them. You know, my oldest is 19. And goes to college, and he knows where all his stuff is he knows he takes care of his calendar. And he cooks he cleans, he washes. And so he's finally the young man that he needed to be, he should have been.

Bill Gasiamis 46:26

Yeah, but mom was still treating him like a child?

Mali Torres 46:33

I kind of was, I was you know, I put I'm not pushed, but I encouraged them before to do what they wanted, you know, learn, learn about the world you know, read, explore. But I had forgotten about the basics, you know because mom will take care of it. You know, because my mom was always the she's from Mexico.

Mali Torres 47:10

And so she had that female role, you know, stereotypical. And, you know, I grew up watching her, and how to take care of the kids. And so I kind of had to let that go and just say, okay, you know what, they can do it. I've taught them enough, they can do it. And man, they stepped up. I mean, they're just amazing, amazing. So that's a great thing to see.

Bill Gasiamis 47:44

Of course because if there's a reason not to do something, because somebody will do it for you, most people don't matter how nice they are, they'll go okay, you do it, no worries, it's just normal, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 47:55

But then when you can't do it, and then they have to step up, then they realize they can do and then it's not a big deal. They do do it. Because they kind of forced me to do it, you know, my kids are 25 and 21 now, but I got to that point where I also realized that hey, you guys are leaving your laundry downstairs?

Bill Gasiamis 48:18

And you're asking us to do it mostly my wife. And then you're when it's not done, you're wondering where your clothes are. And how am I going to get dressed and all that kind of stuff? So I don't know what your plans are for where you're going to go on the weekend.

Bill Gasiamis 48:36

If you know what your plans are, why don't you prepare for that, and don't expect somebody else to prepare for it? But see, we got caught up in that. Because we just continued our behavior from when our kids and our little and they couldn't do their washing.

Bill Gasiamis 48:52

And it's like, oh, hang on a sec. We've been doing this for too long now it's got to stop. Now you have to start doing it on your own because I care for you. When you're a child, now you care for yourself, you're gonna jump out of the nest and go and do your thing. So it's funny how we get stuck in a routine and a process and then it can be 20 years and still we're doing the same process in a certain routine.

## Mali Torres - Having Me Time



Bill Gasiamis 49:22

And, what you do is, instead of realizing that you can let that routine go, you just add extra stuff to that routine, and then you become the person who doesn't have me time and calendar, your calendar should have days in there that say, Mali Day, that's it. This is my day. Nobody else can do anything on this day that interferes with that. You need to just leave all of that out. Do whatever you want, but this is Mali Day I'm not doing anything else.

Mali Torres 49:55

And I have more days like that. I make myself not schedule stuff, but I'll cook a meal just because I want to. And then I'm like, okay, you know what I'm going to go create because I make jewelry. And I make a lot of stuff just because I like creating little things and you know, my jewelry, I do my hair, it's time for me to do this stuff I enjoy.

Mali Torres 50:33

You know, I sit and read a book. And it's like, Alright, I'm out. I'm done for the day. I'm reading and they see a book in my hand, and they're just like, oh, it's mom's time. You know, and I make my coffee, read my book, or my articles or my podcasts. And I'm like, Alright, putting my earbuds in. I'm done for the day, you know?

Mali Torres 50:56

And sometimes it's all day. Sometimes it's after my daily walk. I've made time

more often for myself now. And I don't feel any guilt for it. I don't feel any like, oh, I'm not making time for anybody else. It doesn't bother me anymore.

Mali Torres 51:27

It doesn't. And, you know, I remind other people that it's okay. But then I hear myself. I'm like, Alright, they did that for me for years, too. So it's gonna take a little more, you know, because people always tell me, why didn't you take time for yourself? And I didn't know how. But finally, I do.

Bill Gasiamis 51:51

Yeah, it takes practice, like anything. And you have to be aware of it if you're not aware of it. It's, it's not a fault of yours, it's just that you haven't gained awareness about it yet. And you haven't made time to gain awareness about it, because you're too busy doing stuff for everybody. And you are too busy being the person to go to and the calendar person and the caregiver and all this stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 52:15

And it's like, okay, alright, enough, now we've become aware of it, now we can do something about it. And when we try it out, and you have that time to yourself, you get the benefit of it, and you go, wow, I want more of that, because it's so good, you know, for me to do that, for myself, and to have time where I'm not thinking or doing or where I can be present where I can create, where I can do what I love.

Bill Gasiamis 52:42

And now, I want more of that. And yeah, it does take practice to give yourself space to do that. And not be and not blamed. And not blame the fact that you're not doing it on other people by saying, Well, I have to do this for that person, or the people have to, I have to do that for them. And that's, it's not about them. It's never been about them. You just use that excuse. And then when you stop using that excuse, things change.

Mali Torres 53:17

I was I was always like a natural people pleaser. You know, I'm the third in a family of four kids. You know, I have an older brother, an older sister, a younger brother. And I was always that, like, typical middle child kind of took care of like everybody was I felt better than me.

Mali Torres 53:52

And I needed to do stuff that was gonna get me that attention. And it was I turned into, like the second mom in our family. And so I cook and, did all that for everybody in you know, even as an adult, I still took care of all the holiday planning and the gift planning in place of my mom.

Mali Torres 54:28

And it was just a natural thing for me I didn't realize how much of myself I had spread, you know, throughout the family, not only my family with my boys and my husband but my siblings. And you know, I it was I couldn't help it. I just it was my way of life. You know now It was the first holiday season that just passed that I didn't plan every little bit.

Mali Torres 55:12

Every get-together every menu, you know, we had Thanksgiving here in November. And one of my nephews cooked, he never cooked he brought anything. My sister-in-law made something and brought it and I was so happy.

Mali Torres 55:38

And you know, my older brother, they may and his wife they were cleaning and you know, they helped me set up and I was like, wow, I had to let everybody take their role. And it felt really good. It was an amazing thing that I had no guilt, and no shame in letting all that work get to work itself out. It was awesome. It's been a great experience.

Bill Gasiamis 56:16

I can tell by the look on your face.

Mali Torres 56:18

Oh, yeah.

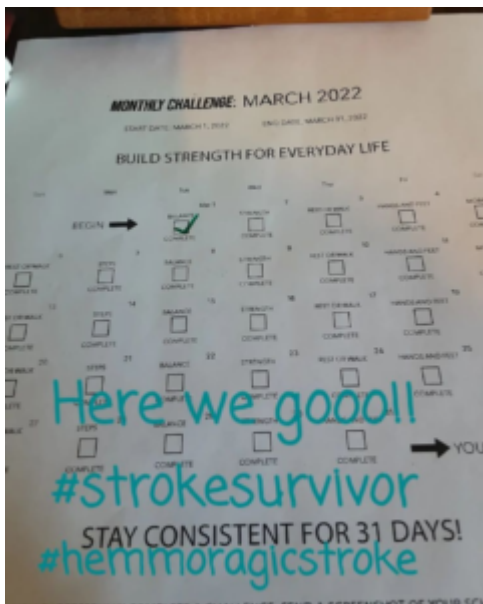
Bill Gasiamis 56:19

So your hair has grown back and you painted it red?

Mali Torres 56:25

Yeah, it's pink. It's magenta. I've done these colors since I was 19. I've had every color under the sun, except black. I've had every hair length shaved off completely down to the middle of my back.

# Starting Over After Sub-thalamic Hemorrhagic Stroke



Mali Torres 56:50

When I woke up in the hospital, I was rubbing my head and I was completely shaved. I was like, Oh, wow, my hair you guys shaved it off. And the nurse apologized. Oh, you know, they didn't want to do just partial because it was gonna look weird.

Mali Torres 57:10

And now it's gonna be able to grow back. And I'm like, and she apologized. She says I'm so sorry. Like, Oh, please, I get to start over. I'm happy. She was like, Are you serious? She's like, how long was your hair? Down to the middle of my back? So like, I said, No, I could start over.

Mali Torres 57:30

I've always had weird hair. I've always had, you know, I've always been that person that's walking down the street. And I'm short. So why I was intimidating? I have no idea. But people would see me and you know, plugs and all this stuff. And the way I dress and stuff people would be even in LA I always stood out.

Bill Gasiamis 58:02

Did you stand out in LA?

Mali Torres 58:04

Yes. If you can imagine that. And, yeah, so people would. It's our I guess it's

always been kind of my shield. But now I'm really happy they shaved my head because I get to start over.

Bill Gasiamis 58:21

I love your looks, your look is cool. I wouldn't be intimidated by somebody like you I would like, wow look at that somebody different who looks, is expressing themselves I would be so I'd be loving it. I mean, I might not walk to you I might not have come over and just said hey, I love your hair, or anything like that.

Bill Gasiamis 58:45

But I wouldn't have been intimidated. I often don't get intimidated by the things that intimidate other people. And, I found that strange that people would get intimidated because they see tattoos or whatever. Or a big guy or muscley guy and they have these ideas. You know, one muscley guy with tattoos means a bike or, like come on, man.

Bill Gasiamis 59:10

Like a little more what the word. Like a little more open-minded. I don't know. Maybe I wasn't always completely open-minded because I was taught to label people and to make them you know that they fit this stereotypical look, you know, but, man, that's one of the things about a tattoo culture now is there's so much tattoo culture now.

Bill Gasiamis 59:24

People are wearing tattoos all over the world all over the place. And from any background and from with muscles without muscles, you know, with hair, without hair, and it doesn't matter.

Bill Gasiamis 59:57

It doesn't make a difference some of the sweetest people that I know are covered in tattoos. And back in the day, those people would be made to feel. I don't know what, like, you'd get intimidated by the sweetest person. Like, come on.

Mali Torres 1:00:18

It's funny cuz I kind of grew up around that because my father before I was born, hung out with bikers, he built his motorcycle, you know, beautiful, and, but one too many accidents. And he was like, I'm done. I am done with it. And but, you know, he was in the army, had army tattoos and you know, stuff and, but a lot of his friends were you know, the mean bikers, the big beards, and, you know,

tattoos.

Mali Torres 1:01:04

So I guess seeing that, it was kind of like, I knew these people, I knew that they're regular people, and you know, so it was still. So I saw how people reacted to them. And I was like, but that guy's like a teddy bear what are you talking about?

Mali Torres 1:01:30

You know, so it was a lot easier for me to accept people that look like that. And you know, but even in LA, even nowadays, a lot of people with tattoos still get discriminated against, you know, it's less than when I was a child, but still more than it should be.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:51

I did a couple of strange things with my hair. A few Christmases ago. And my hair is always sort of cut short like this, because it hurts when it's longer it's annoying.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:09

So anyway, I cut it short. It's easy to maintain and everything. And it had grown, say about two or three weeks worth of growth. So it was much thicker than what you can see now. And I'd like to have it nice and short. So I was at home, I couldn't get to the hairdresser.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:28

And I put the Clippers in and I started to cut it and I cut half of it off. And I made a nice line. And I left the other half without being cut. And I went to Christmas lunch like that. And everybody was freaking out because my family is not used to that stuff. They said what are you doing? What happened? I was like nothing, man, I just had a haircut and I left it like that, like, what's wrong with that?

Mali Torres 1:02:54

Like? Why not?

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:56

So I did that. And everybody was freaking out. And one of the people that was there says he looked at me and did the whole Okay, well, there's worse things in life than that. And he was he was trying to make himself feel better about my decision to leave my hair half cut, and half not cut.



Bill Gasiamis 1:03:20

And then the following year, I went with a mohawk. It was just straight down the middle, just not a straight line or anything, and wasn't a good line was just terrible. And then the third year, I didn't do anything. And my niece said to me, where's the weird haircut this year?

Mali Torres 1:03:37

Right? She's gotten used to it, that's funny

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:42

Yeah, I have to go back and do it again. It does not matter what your hair looks like it doesn't make a difference.

## People Worth Keeping In Your Life



Mali Torres 1:03:53

No it's a freeing experience when you can do stuff like that. It just, you know, it forces people to like, want to know who you are, you know, when you look different. It takes them you know, some people just are unwilling to get beyond what you look like.

Mali Torres 1:04:23

But there are those good people. They're like, well, this is just the outside. This is just what you're wearing today. I want to know what's inside. You know, and those are the people you want around. Those are the people that are worth keeping in your life because they're not seeing just outside because we don't look like this all the time.

Mali Torres 1:04:43

You know, there are times I'll go outside and my hair's not done and I don't wear makeup anymore. I just don't have the patience for it. But, you know, I grew up with a sister, She was the quote-unquote perfect sister. You know, her hair was always done. And her makeup was always flawless, and she matched everything, and she was that perfect woman, you know, and there was still that unhappiness.

Mali Torres 1:05:25

You know that, like, people wanted to know her only as that perfect person. So when she was a little off, are you okay? People would flip out because she wasn't kept perfect. And it's like, I don't want to be like that. I want people to you know what, this is how I look right now. And then half an hour, I'll be, you know, my hair is gonna be messy. And I'd rather be that way than have to keep up this thing.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:02

It would be tiring to be the person who feels like you have to always present yourself in the same way. I know women who I know of women who would have their makeup on before their husbands woke up.

Mali Torres 1:06:21

Yes. My grandmother's generation. That's what they did. They woke up super early. And their husbands never, ever thought they would go to bed with makeup on. Get up when their husbands fell asleep, take it off, then get up before their husband said put it back on.

Mali Torres 1:06:43

And it's like, why? I don't get it, I don't get it. So I never wanted to be like that. I never felt comfortable around people like that. I'm just like, I want to know who the person is just, and then, you know, knowing so many different types of people. Like I said before, musicians and artists and you know, it, no one I know looks the same.

Mali Torres 1:07:13

Even I look different than a lot of my friends you know, and I know designers and graphic designers and bakers and just, all of us look different. And we all bring something to the table. And it's when you hang out with people like that, it just makes it feel better, makes life better.

Mali Torres 1:07:39

You know, and it reminds our kids because most of us have kids, it reminds our kids that as life goes on as time goes on, people around us that we don't know, our learning. You know, they see the confidence that a lot of us have and like, even though I've dealt with anxiety I had for so long.

Mali Torres 1:08:08

The one thing I wasn't anxious about was what I was wearing. Because it was mine it was my armor, you know, against everything. It was gonna keep the people that weren't supposed to be my life away. You know? Yeah. So it's one of the things that got my husband's attention when we first saw each other. And our story is, we were very much meant to go together.

Mali Torres 1:08:46

We because we saw each other at a concert in LA one year, and we've been together 23 years now. And we saw each other at a concert. Well, he saw me because I used to have what I call a bull ring. So my septum was pierced pretty large. And had more facial piercings because you can see I had that done.

Mali Torres 1:09:18

And I used to have one up and down. Had my eyebrows done. And he saw he passed it at a venue in LA. And it was a band that for every woman that listened to them 100 guys listened to them. So it was unusual to see a woman who was there to enjoy the music.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:46

It wasn't where you went to go and find the women was it?

Mali Torres 1:09:51

Not really no, no, you know, if a woman was looking for a guy. Have your pick. You know but I went in with a friend of mine who I worked with. And so I had seen my husband, I had just come out of the pit after a few songs stood in the back. And Sama has been with a friend of his not too far away from us.

Mali Torres 1:10:28

And I was like, okay, you know, whatever. Well, he saw me in the hallway, later on during the show, and at that time of my life, it was like, I didn't look at anyone, you know, it was like, I'm here for the music. And you'd like this, you know, don't look at me, I'm not gonna look at you.

Mali Torres 1:10:54

Well six months later, I was going to Santa Barbara, which is three hours north of us to see the same band. And that's when AOL had the chat rooms. So I was bragging hey I'm gonna go see them again. And so he happened to pop up, not knowing that it was him.

Mali Torres 1:11:23

And he instant messaged me. And so we started talking and of all the people that sent me messages, he stood out, and I was like, Alright, so we started talking, start talking. Start talking about the band, and music. And yeah, I saw them back then. Oh, yeah, I was at that show.

Mali Torres 1:11:50

And so we started talking, and we realized we'd already seen each other. Like, wait, no show, you know. And this was six months later. You know, it was just crazy. And so he met up a few weeks later. And that was it he's been here ever since. I kept him you know?

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:20

He was the keeper.

Mali Torres 1:12:22

Yeah, definitely. And what's funny is he wasn't the type of guy I usually looked at. But getting to know each other. We talked for a long time online. So it was always chats and, you know, as before, texts and all that. So it was when he came over, it was like, I'd known him forever.

Mali Torres 1:12:55

And then when he moved in with me, he brought his music collection. And again, music is huge in our family. And it was seriously 95% The same as what I had already. So oh, man, it was insane how much we had in common. And yeah, I mean, still, we enjoy just finding new music, and new bands and you know, going and just we'll go for drives. And in LA, you know, we go along the beach. And it's all music. It's all just, you know, okay, what are we putting on today?

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:56

Sounds like you appreciate it much more now.

Mali Torres 1:13:59

Much more. I mean, as much as I've always loved music. It's just it's so different now. It's like you I don't know. It's kind of like, this wall was broken down. And just now I see not just the music but what it took to get there and the journey that person is seeking, I hear the words and I can appreciate so much more of it and enjoy just not music isn't just a background thing.

Mali Torres 1:14:14

You know, it's, I hear it. I hear the emotion the work put into it. The feeling It's funny because some of the music that I listen to you wouldn't think it would be emotional. Because it's very hard. There's there's a band I listen to called Lamb of God. And they're very metal, okay.

Mali Torres 1:15:21

And they have a song that's called Walk with me in hell. The singer wrote it to his wife when she miscarried their child, one of their children. And that can be a very lonely experience, you know, and he wrote this for her. And that's now mine and my husband's song.

Mali Torres 1:15:49

And so when we listen, I tell people, This is our song, and they're like, What are you talking about? No, you have to understand what is behind that. He was he was not gonna leave her alone. He was in it for life for everything. Good, bad, horrible. They were together.

Mali Torres 1:16:23

And he wanted to remind her. And I'm lucky enough to have a man that is there for me just the same. And sings me dumb songs every day and just makes up stupid things. And I love it. And I get to enjoy that every day. And it's an amazing thing, what our partners can do for us.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:51

It is. I'm lucky to like that. So, look, I have enjoyed our chat, getting to know you a little bit, and listening to your experience about anxiety going away because of a stroke. Thank you for reaching out and sharing that and letting me know.

Mali Torres 1:17:12

Thank you for having me. I appreciate it. I appreciate it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:17

Well, thanks for listening to another episode of the Recovery after Stroke podcast. I appreciate you doing so. And also, I appreciate everybody who watches on YouTube and leaves a comment a thumbs up. I do appreciate hearing from people. I love the feedback. I love commenting, I love having a conversation, and listening to what other people have to say.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:42

So if you're on YouTube watching this, please give the show a thumbs up follow subscribe, and hit the Notifications tab. If you're listening on Spotify, Apple podcasts or Android gives us that give the show a five-star review. If you think it deserves it, leave a comment and let me know what you think.

Bill Gasiamis 1:18:02

I look forward to hearing from you. And mostly I appreciate you tuning in to every episode and letting me know that you love the show. Thanks so much. It's a real pleasure to bring it to you and I look forward to seeing you in the next episode.

Intro 1:18:19

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Intro 1:18:36

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Intro 1:18:53

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Intro 1:19:14

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doctor or your rehabilitation program based on our content if you have any questions or concerns about your health or medical condition, please seek guidance from a doctor or other medical professional if you are experiencing a health emergency or think you might be, call triple zero if in Australia or your local emergency number immediately for emergency assistance or go to the nearest hospital emergency department.

Intro 1:19:38

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