How Emotional Intelligence Helps With Stroke Recovery – Usha Raman

Emotional Intelligence can help you get unstuck, remove emotional baggage, gain more confidence, and live mindfully and happily after a stroke.

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Transcription:

Bill 0:00
So I want to ask you about how does emotional intelligence get, how is that part of mindfulness? Because emotional intelligence seems to be like a different thing, but it does come kind of as a package or a parcel, or are they brother and sister, how does it work?

Usha 0:17
It is very much, you know, in a package. So with emotional awareness, one of the first things is, you know, self-awareness and self-regulation. So there's four parts to emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-regulation, and then people awareness and people regulation and all of that aspects require mindfulness.

Usha 0:37
And now with you know, research, we know that when we practice, things like meditation or mindfulness the logical side of the brain and the emotional centers of the brain actually speak to each other more clearly.

Intro 0:54
This is the recovery after stroke podcast, with Bill Gasiamis, helping you navigate recovery after stroke.

Introduction – Emotional Intelligence And Stroke



Bill 1:07
Bill from recoveryafterstroke.com This is Episode 125. And my guest today is Usha Raman. Usha trains people in organizations on how to be more mindful, and emotionally intelligent to build an inclusive, mindful and resilient company culture.

Bill 1:26
Now before we get started, if you have ever wondered what else I can do to help you with your stroke recovery, you should know that you can now get recovery after stroke coaching right from the comfort of your own home.

Bill 1:37
I too am a three-time stroke survivor and brain surgery survivor and I have built for you what I was missing when I was sent home from hospital in the hopes that you don’t have to do stroke recovery as tough as I did.

Bill 1:49
Support packages give you access to a variety of tools 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so that you can also work on other areas of stroke recovery, that you don't get the chance to at physical therapy or rehabilitation.

Bill 2:02
With tailored support available for less than $8.50 per week, all recovery after stroke support packages, bring stroke recovery to you in the comfort of your own home. to try out recovery after stroke support and see if it is right for you, you will get the first seven days free as well as a 30-day money-back guarantee no questions asked.

Bill 2:22
As a bonus, you will also get to face to face zoom support calls with myself to take your recovery to the next level. Go to recoveryafterstroke.com/momentum to sign up, it won't cost you anything for the first seven days. And you will get a full refund. If you're not happy after 30 days, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. And now it's on with the show.

Bill 2:44
Usha Raman, welcome to the podcast.

Usha 2:47
Thank you for having me, Bill.

Bill 2:49
Thank you for having me, and being on my show. This is your second attempt to get this happening because of technical difficulties. It always is the case when we get together with somebody to have a really important conversation, something else gets in the way. And we have to overcome it.

Bill 3:08
My coaching clients who are stroke survivors, and the people who listen to this podcast, often have this idea that they need to make a physical recovery, they focus on their physical recovery, which is very important. But they often neglect a couple of other parts of the recovery, which are just as important.

Bill 3:28
And one of them is the cognitive side, which they also get some support for. But

the one that very often gets missed is the emotional recovery. And without that they're missing one third of what's required for recovery. So I reached out to you because I know that you work in the space of emotional intelligence. Tell me a little bit about what you do.

Usha 3:53
Sure so I'm a trainer and a coach. And in my training workshops, be with individual clients, public or corporate. I work with mindfulness techniques, as well as emotional intelligence and just sort of teaching people what mindfulness means and how they couldn't be more emotionally aware, not just about themselves, but also for other people.

Mind full vs Mindful

Bill 4:19
Okay, so I hear the word mindfulness come into your conversation about emotional intelligence. Firstly, I never connected the two but when I hear mindfulness, I hear that my mind is full. And as a stroke survivor, that doesn't resonate with me. So is my understanding or my definition of mindful, correct? Or is there's something else going on there?

Usha 4:45
Yeah, excellent way to say that because mind full could be spelled with two Ls or one L. So when you're full of mind, it means we're ruminating and there's always thoughts and we can't really relax or be present whereas mindful spelled with one L is where we are just directing our full attention on what we're experiencing, in this present moment right now with all our senses, all our thoughts, all our emotions.

Usha 5:12
And not allowing the mind to run off into the past, or to run out into the present, which is what, unfortunately, a lot of time the mind does, you know, it runs away to the past, thinking, Oh, you know, this is what happened to me before, or this is what I used to be like, or it goes to into the future, like what needs to happen next, what am I to dos?

Usha 5:31
What do I need to, you know, plan for something happens to me, or this has really

happened to me, you know, with stroke survivors, what do I need to do, and that can get into overwhelm. But if we just bring our mind back to what is happening now, and then sustaining that awareness of what is just happening, now we're able to live with a lot less stress. But also, then we begin to understand what we need to do in this moment. So that it will lead to the next moment anyway, and then do that moment really well.

Bill 6:06
So if I understand correctly, what you're saying is, if I'm practicing mindfulness in the moment right now, and I'll take myself back to the time when I was in hospital, there was a lot of unknowns, there was a lot of concern about my future, my well being my family's future, all the stuff that normal people go through when they have a health scare, whether they're stroke survivor, or they've had heart attack, or cancer or whatever.

Bill 6:30
And from what you're saying is, what I'm understanding is if I was in that hospital bed, wondering about what I can do right now, to get me to feel better now or to have a really good physical therapy session right now, that's more supportive and more beneficial to my long term recovery than trying to solve problems in the future that haven't happened yet.

Usha 6:55
Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, I haven't had stroke myself. But one little thing that happened with me was that I was assaulted once. And because of that, you know, it was quite a bad assault, and I thought I was going to die that day. And so after that, what happened was, I had some sort of post traumatic stress disorder.

Usha 7:19
So whenever I used to walk around the house, I would always think that there was somebody outside the door outside the house, and they're just waiting. And it's like, you know, visually, I almost saw someone there dressed in a way that the person was dressed.

Usha 7:31
And it was, it takes time to understand that. So I had to understand and ask myself, what is happening now? What is now what is happening now? And look again, okay, I am safe now. So what can I do now to help myself? And then you

get those answers, as opposed to Oh, no, if this keeps going on, will I ever recover?

Usha 7:53
What's going to happen to my family, they're gonna think that I'm crazy, because I'm always panicking. And then you go into all these overwhelming thoughts. But if we come back to, okay, this is me, right now, in this moment, I'm not the same girl I was before.

Usha 8:07
And a lot of times, especially with patients who've been through the sort of traumatic events, they want to go back to their old self, and they're in such a rush to get there. Right. And because you're in such a rush, you have this sense of desperate energy and, you may feel really frustrated with yourself, and you end up frustrating the people around you.

Usha 8:31
So recovery, and healing is a journey. And we have to first accept that I am not that person that I used to be anymore. I am this new person. Right. And from there comes that mindful awareness of what can I do now? What can you do now? What can I do now?

Bill 8:48
I think you're right, with the acceptance of the fact that you're different. Now. I think stroke survivors get stuck on the fact that they focus on the negatives of that difference. So they might focus on I'm not walking, or I can't use one of my arms or whatever the issue is.

Bill 9:06
So that focusing on who they are now, they sort of see themselves as the perfect version of themselves in the past. And what they're perhaps missing is that they might have played a role in the reason why stroke had occurred. Now, it may be in some cases that you didn't play a role in why stroke has occurred, and that's perfectly fine we understand that.

Bill 9:30
But for the stroke survivors who smoked too much or didn't eat healthily or took on too much stress, or too much worry or too much concern, created an environment for stroke to occur. You don't want to go back and be that person

because if you go back to be the person you were before the stroke, you're gonna have another stroke.

Bill 9:52
I mean, you're just going there for the wron reason, right? And one other thing is and when you have the stroke, you are a different version. And that version is a way more evolved version than the person who you were because now you have an opportunity to learn some amazing life lessons.

Bill 9:58
And I'm not saying they're going to be easy. And I'm not saying it's not gonna be hard. But what I'm saying is, is that you can use the experience of the person that you were up until that point in time, and enhance that person, even though your arm doesn't work.

Usha 10:33
Absolutely. And that's so key, isn't it? What you say was really beautiful, because you really face that experience in such a positive way that, you know, you're saying all this new experience is going to allow me to learn something. But what I find with a lot of people have gone through trauma that you like to ask the question, why me?

Usha 10:54
You know, and that is, unfortunately, one of the most detrimental questions that we can ask ourselves, Why me? Why me? Why me? And that causes the rumination to happen. It could have been anyone, why not you? Right? So it's then turning that question into, instead of why me, you can say it is me.

Usha 11:15
This has chosen me and I'm going through this and now seeing what we can do to heal ourselves. But even on a day to day basis, with or without a stroke, for example, we are constantly changing and evolving, anyway, we're never going to be the same person that we were, even by the time we finish this conversation physiologically, we're not the same people trillions, we have trillions of cells.

Identity – Usha Raman



Usha 11:41
And you know, every minute we have 10s of thousands of cells that die and regenerate all the time. But we get so locked into what we think is our identity. And this is why mindfulness is so key, because we want to break free from the locks of our identity. Because yeah, maybe you were an avid swimmer before the stroke.

Usha 12:05
But now, you can't be that swimmer anymore. But you still have the identity. But I'm a swimmer, but I'm a swimmer but I'm a swimmer, but guess what? You're not one anymore. Wow, what does that mean now? What can I be instead? And understanding that if we stop asking why me? Or holding on to those identities, we then open the door of possibilities.

Bill 12:27
Yeah, I feel like identity can be very difficult thing, especially if you have a very narrow identity, it shouldn't be niche. In business, we talk about find your niche, find the group or organization or people who will buy your services, and aim for them and talk to them and speak in their language.

Bill 12:50
The thing about identity is if I identify myself as only a swimmer, and all I ever did in my life was swim and I never associated with anybody else outside of swimming, and would never spoke about anything other than swimming, then it would be very easy for my identity to be challenged not only due to a health condition, but also just because my career might come to an end.

Bill 13:12
It might just be that I can no longer swim because I'm 45 years old, and I can't compete at the level of a 30 year old or a 28 year old so I have to become

somebody else. And I have to have swimming as part of the the multiple aspects of myself that exist in my identity and not just my one identity.

Bill 13:39
And that's kind of where I am now I feel like I'm a person who not only has had a stroke, and can talk about stroke and interview stroke survivors and people like yourself about mindfulness and emotional intelligence. But I'm also the guy that used to do all those other things.

Bill 13:57
And I've just brought them into this new version of myself, and I'm using what I learned when I was only a painting contractor. I'm using it in this version of my life because the skills are transferable. So if I was a swimmer, and I learned something about for example, about stroke, I might not be a coach of a golfer.

Bill 14:29
But the concept of around a process that I followed to have the perfect stroke or try to always achieve the perfect strokes I can be efficient in the water is the same conversation I can have with a golfer about what the perfect swing is and how to aim for it and try to get it as many times as we can, so that we can hit the ball perfectly as often as possible.

Bill 14:51
Now, I might not know how specifically to hit the ball, but they know because they've hit it before perfectly and I could transfer those skills from how I learned to swim with the perfect stroke, we can have a conversation about how to try and hit the ball with the perfect swing as often as possible. Can we not?

Usha 15:11
Yeah, absolutely. Is that it? Well, you know, our skills are transferable. And a lot of times when we resist what is happening now, we don't realize that that door is available, we think we have to make this 180 degree and there's so much uncertainty. You know, even with this covid pandemic, that's happened, like it brought up so many people's fears, and uncertainty breeds fear.

Usha 15:34
But I had a lovely mentor that once told me, you know, how successful you are, is completely co-related to your degree of dealing with uncertainty. And I have remembered that forever, you know, how happy I am, how successful I am, is

directly correlated to my degree of dealing with uncertainty.

Usha 15:58
And there's always going to be uncertainties, you know, and especially I think with a stroke survivor, you're suddenly very confronted with your mortality, right? And how fragile life really, really is. Same for me, when I went through that assault, it's like, in an instant, I could have just not have a breath anymore.

Usha 16:18
And now, with COVID, especially the whole human race that understands what's going on, is confronted with this concept of mortality, right. But mindfulness is something that reminds us all the time when you're mindful, we are very, very in touch with the concept of impermanence.

Usha 16:39
Nothing is permanent. But that doesn't mean that it's death. It just means it's transformation. And that's such a powerful way to look at it. Like, I'm transforming, I'm transforming, and I'm transforming, I'm transforming. And using each moment to reveal itself to you of who you can be in that moment, it's a very powerful exercise.

Usha 17:03
To say the least, of course, it's difficult to do, especially if we haven't practiced a lot. But like with anything, you know, it is a learned skill. And, you know, we now know from some research that our mind wanders only 47% of the time, a lot of people think it's a lot more they think 80% 90% that's what I usually hear.

Usha 17:25
But it's only about 47% of the time. So if we can just inch forward and take that 47% today to maybe 48% today, and then tomorrow, we can say let's see how mindful they can be today. So setting intentions to be mindful is very important. I always talk about activating your environment in my workshops.

Usha 17:46
So look around your environment, especially after you've gone through a traumatic event. What is supporting you? What isn't? Do you need more plants around the house? Do you have positive phrases everywhere? What sort of books do you want to surround yourself with?

Usha 18:03
And really, like I have a very simple quote on my desktop that I see every day. Today, I am mindful. And that's all I need to go. Every time I turn on my laptop. Ah, yes, today I am mindful. You know, another one on my desk that says what we practice grows stronger.

Usha 18:21
And every time I see myself practicing judgment, I'm going ah unconsciously practicing judgment. That's not what I want to grow stronger. I want to practice mindfulness and I want to make mindfulness grow stronger. So especially after a traumatic event, I think it's really important to set up your environment in a positive way for your healing.

Intro 18:39
If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time it can be, you're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind. Like now how long will it take to recover? Will I actually recover? What things should I avoid In case I make matters worse?

Intro 18:57
Doctors will explain things that obviously, you've never had to strike before, you probably don't know what questions to ask. If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation. Stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com.

Intro 19:16
Where you can download a guide that will help you. It's called seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke. These seven questions are the ones bill wished he'd asked when he was recovering from a stroke. They'll not only help you better understand your condition, and they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery. head to the website now, recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide. It's free.

What you practice grows stronger

Bill 19:42
I love what you just said about what you practice grows stronger. Mindfulness is a practice. And the word actually says what you must do. You must practice it to be

good at it. And with regards to if you're practicing being judgemental. Well what it's actually doing people who are stroke survivors know about neuroplasticity because we talk about it all the time.

Bill 20:09
If you're being judgmental all the time, you're using neuroplasticity in a negative way to create neural pathways that are about judgment. And the more you use them, the more neural pathways will evolve, and they'll get stronger. So the best thing to do is to not practice judgment to practice the opposite of judgment, which I imagine is something like acceptance, or love, or gratitude or something like that.

Bill 20:35
And then the judgment, neural pathways will go away, and they'll be harder to reuse and regenerate because they'll completely be gone by a period of time after you've stopped practicing that. And that's basically how we can use neuroplasticity in a mindful way as well. What do we want to create neural pathways about? We would not want to create new pathways about things that are not serving us.

Usha 21:04
Yeah, absolutely. And it's fascinating that you said that because, you know, especially with the practice part, the word mindfulness was coined, because that it was actually from an ancient language called Pali. And the word was Sati. Right? So usually, there's a little bit of stuff that gets lost in translation and retranslate.

Usha 21:26
So a lot of times now, when people talk about mindfulness, you hear terms like just be just be just be. But for a lot of my clients, they've got how do I do that? You know, how do I just be? But when we look at the, I guess, the translation of Sati, it actually means maintaining awareness of reality.

Usha 21:48
And what does maintenance mean? Like what do you maintain in your life, right, you maintain your car, your house, your relationships, and maintenance means there is effort and work involved. So although it is very much a being word, and to be present, but there is some doing involved, and that doing is what you're talking

about with acceptance.

Usha 22:10
So every time the mind wanders, you have to very intentionally bring it back with acceptance and compassion. So although it's being worked there is doing and I think that sometimes gets lost a lot. And people think, okay, I'm just going to be, I'm just going to be and then the mind wanders, like, oh, they get frustrated.

Usha 22:28
But the work actually happens when that frustration happens, and when you realize that your mind has wandered off. And mindfulness is really just closing that gap between when your mind has wandered off, and you realizing that it has wandered off, right. So it is practicing and practicing and practicing closing that gap, really, and doing that with that attitude of compassion,

Bill 22:52
Yeah, compassion for yourself for the situation that you're in, the person that you're talking to, I found that I cannot be mindful when I'm angry, I cannot be mindful when I'm upset when I'm yelling, and screaming, all I'm going to be doing is being yelling and screaming and being upset at that time.

Bill 23:11
And in order to be mindful, I've got to change something. And for me, what I've got to usually change is the breath, I've got to usually take a big deep breath. And change my state by breathing differently. And therefore, the cortisol in my body can decrease. And as it starts to decrease, then the mindfulness can come back into the picture.

Bill 23:35
And I can start actually becoming aware of what I just did. And if I didn't like what I just did, apologize for doing that to the person I did it to. And then even apologize to myself and say, look, I'm not going to be hard on myself for misbehaving, I'm going to do the right thing, I'm going to apologize first, I'm going to accept that I'm human, and that I make mistakes.

Bill 23:59
And that's not my ideal behavior, and I don't want to participate in life that way. And then from there, I can bring things back to right now what's important right now I'm safe. We have a disagreement, it's okay to be different. It's okay to have

different opinions.

Bill 24:16
I'm not taking their opinion personally. I can bring myself to a point where I can start rationalizing things better. That served me and the situation better than what it did. When I thought I was being, for example, maybe personally attacked or something like that.

Usha 24:33
Yeah, there is a lot of I guess, emotions that come up right after a trauma and, you know, things like, what did I do to deserve this or you know, what happens next? And it's really important, especially with emotional intelligence, to ask yourself if the questions I am asking are useful or not useful?

Usha 24:59
And then phrasing those questions in a way that's going to give you the answers you need. Rather than stuff that's going to get you to play the victim. Right? And it is, you know, we all go through those phases and having that attitude of compassion is key.

Usha 25:17
But we don't want there is a difference between, I guess, having that compassion for ourselves, and then wallowing in misery, right. So we have to really understand that as much as we want to be compassionate about ourselves, we have to love ourselves enough to transform.

Usha 25:33
And you know, having that, I guess, it could be little things that you do throughout your day, that helps you be mindful, like I always believe that daily habits are so important, and how you want to build your world around being mindful. So one of the things I start off with is, you know, sometimes brushing my teeth with my non-master Hand because they don't want to have toothpaste running all over my face.

Usha 26:01
So that's one very quick habit that we can build into our day. Another thing that I do is, every day, no matter how busy I am, I have a five minutes of a mindful cup of tea, you know, when I have that tea, there is no devices, then there's no one else around me. And I'm only just enjoying the tea, the tastes of the tea, my

mouth and how it feels, how I'm breathing.

Usha 26:23
And breath is one of the most important things that you brought up, you know, and having the even breath. So one of the things that I'm passionate about is actually yoga. And I am a certified yoga instructor as well. So there's a lot of breath techniques that we can use.

Usha 26:39
One is the equal part breath. So you just breathe in for four counts, you breathe out for four, and then you breathe in five, and then down for five. And you just try and keep increasing that. The other one that I like is the box breathing. So you breathe in for four counts, you hold for four counts, you breathe out for four counts, and then you hold for four counts.

Usha 27:00
And you keep repeating this over and over until, you know, maybe you can even build up from four counts to five cards to six counts. So just little techniques throughout the day to just center ourselves so important, and not get caught up in being mindful all the time.

Usha 27:18
Because, you know, how mind like I said, wanders 47% of the time, and just accepting that the nature of the mind is to wander is in itself so powerful. You know, it's like bringing up a beautiful child or you're taking your pet dog to the park, it's gonna wander off, it's gonna get curious, it's gonna want to pee on every tree if it's a doggy.

Usha 27:39
But that's just the nature of the animal have, it's the nature of the child is to wander off in play and be curious. And if we treat our mind, like a loving parent, or like a loving adult in a child's life, then we can look at that child, which is our mind and go, Oh, come on, darling, come back here. You know, it's okay, we've got this. And speaking to ourselves in that loving, nurturing way is very, very important for our healing process.

Bill 28:10
Mindfulness is something that you probably best not to overthink. It's something that we do, right. And I love what you said about the breathing. Because if

whoever's listening and watching this only gets out of this, to do a breathing exercise, then that will be being mindful.

Bill 28:30
If they just stop for five minutes, and breathe, do a balanced breathing exercise, they will have achieved being mindfulness for the day. And what that does to the body is just so tremendous during the day, it actually helps to just alleviate those anxieties, those tensions, those nervousness, it alleviate the cortisol level, it increases the happy hormone, it does all these things.

Bill 28:59
And that lasts for a really, really long time in the day, even if you've just done it for five minutes, right? So say, you heard nothing else from this podcast and you wanted to take one thing away from it. What I would say is, if you can just do a practice of breathing for five minutes a day, you will have been mindful, and you don't have to overthink what mindfulness is.

Emotional Intelligence and stroke

Bill 29:23
So with that, I want to talk about how emotional intelligence is involved in mindfulness because I see them being as two very different things. So I want to ask you about how does emotional intelligence part of mindfulness because emotional intelligence seems to be like a different thing, but it does come kind of as a package or a parcel or are they brother and sister, how does it work?

Usha 29:54
It is very much, you know, in a package so with emotional awareness one of the first things is, you know, self-awareness and self-regulation. So there's four parts to emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-regulation, and then people awareness and people regulation and all of that aspects require mindfulness.

Usha 30:14
And now with, you know, research, we know that when we practice, things like meditation or mindfulness the logical side of the brain, and the emotional centers of the brain actually speak to each other more clearly. So we've got our amygdala, which is our flight fight or freeze response that we can go through, and that's the very reptilian part of the brain.

Usha 30:36
And later on, as the brain develop, we've got our prefrontal cortex, which is all our logical thinking, and our rational thinking. And, you know, although we can see until cows come home, we can say, Oh, no, I'm doing this logically, this is me doing thinking this through.

Usha 30:55
But the fact of the matter is, when we receive electric signals into our mind, it actually goes into the emotional centers first, and then goes to our rational part of the brain. Which is why if somebody jumps up to scare you, you don't go ah that was nothing, and then feel the fright, you feel the fright first and then you have the rational reaction, right?

Usha 31:18
So that's a very simple example. So we're never truly fully rational We are thinking and feeling creatures, you know, that's how we were made. So with emotional intelligence, what was found is, that goes to parts of the brain, there is a connection called the and when we practice mindfulness and meditation, that part actually gets strengthened, like physiologically, you know, so there is physiological evidence now that this is going to help us to react less in life to make better decisions, and for the reptilian part of the brain not to hijack that rational thinking as often, you know, so it's pretty cool.

Bill 32:01
I know that what you said is really important for people to actually pick up in here is that there's a physical change, when you practice emotional awareness, you actually are physically changing your body, you're physically changing a part of you so that it gets larger, and therefore takes up more space, and therefore decreases the opportunity for that reptilian part of the brain to take hold and control you and be your master.

Bill 32:29
It enables that to go quiet, and this other part, to get better and to enhance itself and to be more active in your life. So that's why it's like going to the gym, it's like doing weights, your muscles get bigger, they physically change, they are bigger they are there you can see them.

Bill 32:45

And although people can see that emotional center, increasing or expanding, doesn't mean that it's not actually changed and increased. And that's that part of neuroplasticity, again, that we're talking about that. It's what we focus on grows, and therefore, that's going to help us in our recovery.

Bill 33:07
Now one of the things we're sure is that men, I'm going to generalize, and I'm going to be hard on my fellow men, men seem less capable of being emotionally aware, or they are so emotionally aware, but they are so afraid of going there, that they just don't do it.

Bill 33:26
And therefore they miss out on this really important part of recovery, where as a women, in my opinion, seem to be able to get there a little bit easier and quicker. And I think I've always been emotionally aware but didn't know what to do with it. And I found myself connecting with women better than I connected with men about deep and meaningful conversations men wouldn't want to go there with me.

Bill 33:51
How have you found you've been able to tease out the emotional awareness or the emotional intelligence of men? Is that something that we can do in a safe way so we can bring more men to that space?

Usha 34:09
Well, what you're doing is the perfect example of that you're giving men the space to say, oh, gosh, yes, I can talk about my feelings. So Bill, what you're doing is amazing, right. And, you know, I have seen in workshops as well, like, there was one in particular that comes to mind where this this gentleman was asking, you know, a lot of tough questions.

Usha 34:30
And he was like, really hard on me during the training during the workshop. And I just answered based on what I knew what I've read, read and learned, and he could see that Yep, he was thinking he was thinking, but I wasn't really sure what exactly he was thinking, but I was like, you know, I'm just gonna speak my truth here and own it.

Usha 34:50
And at the end of that workshop, he stayed behind for another good 45 minutes

just talking and talking and talking and talking and he's like, I've never had a chance. To see all this before. Yeah. And I found that since then that yeah, it is unfortunately, especially I guess, you know, people from our generation, I'm guessing you're around the same age as me.

Usha 35:14
You know, guys have been taught not to show their feelings so much. And same with my dad, my dad never said the word. I love you until, you know, I had to leave the country for good. And then he was like, you know, dad loves you, right? And it's a shame, it's a shame, but it is what it is. And we have to accept that this is how we've been brought out.

Usha 35:36
But that does not mean that this is my conditioning. And that's where the identity comes in, that we spoke about, we've identified ourselves as men, and a man doesn't show feelings a man strong, a man cannot open up. These are what just false identities that we've created for ourselves. But we now realize, Oh, that's not serving me anymore.

Usha 36:00
It may have served you up to a point. But the moment you realize that, that's your realization of saying, Ah, that's an identity. And I can loosen its grip. So what can I do next to loosen the grip, and that's a lot of self regulation that we talked about emotional intelligence.

Bill 36:16
Yeah, I was gonna ask you about your heritage, because we're from a great background, I'm 47 years old, and my parents were children of people who went through who have experienced two wars. And, man, I didn't even understand the concept or how that even is possible.

Bill 36:34
But they became people that basically got on with the job didn't talk about much. The fact that they were alive was enough. The fact that they had a piece of bread to eat was enough, there wasn't a lot of other complications in their life, other than really surviving, and learning from their parents how to survive in a country, like Greece that was ravaged by war, and then poverty, and all the things that come after that.

Bill 36:59
And for many, many decades, and then they left their homeland, and they came to Australia with nothing. And it's a cliche, but they actually came with nothing to start again, and learn how to survive. So they did what they were taught well, by their parents, it's like their parents knew that these kids would have to leave and survive on their own again, in another foreign place.

Bill 37:24
And then they started their life in the same way it's served them, they're in their 70s. Now, and I'm wondering, as a 47 year old, somebody who lives in Australia, their way of life is not one I can comprehend. And unless we have, unfortunately, some crazy bloody war here, which we're very fortunate not to have.

Bill 37:45
I don't need those skills, I don't need their skills, I need different skills. And if I need to access the skills that they had, then things are going to be very different in Australia than they are now. So where did your family come from?

Usha 38:03
So I was born in Singapore, both my parents were born in Singapore, but they're an Indian of an intensive ancestry. So like my grandmother, you know, she lived through the war, my mom lived in a British camp, which is where she met my dad. So you know, they saw all the I guess the effects of war from then and same with you, you know, for them was all about just surviving, and getting through the next day and getting enough bread to eat.

Usha 38:31
And it was almost as if there was, like, a fear. Definitely, there was a lot of fear base like on what if we in case, we don't have enough there was that mentality and also, I guess, of having this glass ceiling that this is as far as we go and that's it right? So yeah, it's definitely taken a while to understand that that glass ceiling was only in their minds.

Usha 39:03
And it actually doesn't have to apply to me anymore. So yeah, we've, I think one of the best things with emotional intelligence is we are able to step away from our experiences and looking at things from a very observer point of view. In fact, we use the word observer mode in mindfulness a lot as well.

Usha 39:24
And we go into that observer mode, and ask ourselves, okay, these are just my thoughts. And I am don't have to identify with these thoughts. You know, we can think my parents went through that, therefore, I'm like this, or I feel this way because my mom didn't care enough.

Usha 39:42
Or, you know, and this is because I wasn't taught the right thing. I wasn't taught how to eat healthy, which is why I've had the stroke and then stay in but now taking the observer point and go, Oh, that was my childhood. And that was the conditioning. But what can I do now? Always had coming back to the now is so important, right?

Bill 40:05
It's like a responsibility. It's like, what can I be responsible for now, I know that that happened then. And that's how they taught me. And I'm not responsible for that. They are responsible for that. And I forgive them because they did the best that I could do with the resources that they had available to them at the time.

Bill 40:21
So let's give them a break for perhaps not making every perfect decision for me. But now that I know that, and I can continue on with my life, or what are the perfect decisions that I need to make for myself? And when they actually shown to be the wrong decision.

Bill 40:39
How can I just get over there? How can I just say, well, okay, I thought it was the right decision, I did that it didn't work out. And here I am, now I'm going to change my trajectory, and I'm going to try something new. And that glass ceiling that you talked about, that's such a true thing, because the glass ceiling often is set by our parents, isn't it?

Bill 40:57
It's set by the generations that have passed. And some parents will say, you can be anything you want to be. But they didn't do that, by example. They stayed like a factory worker, or they were always an engineer, and they never really followed their passion of being a florist or whatever, you know.

Bill 41:21

And they created a glass ceiling for themselves, but they encouraged us to potentially not have one. But even then, they didn't actually lead by example, they just wanted us to, they wanted to live through us rather than be themselves because they made sacrifices for us.

Bill 41:39
So that we can make sure that we have a roof over our head, more bread to eat. And they had, that we were living in a country that's safer than they lived in, or grew up in, and that hopefully we don't experience what they experienced. So it's a really interesting conversation about understanding that perhaps some of what we're experiencing our life has been given to us as part of the legacy of our generations before us that was from 100 years ago, or 150 years ago.

Bill 42:12
And it was relevant then. But maybe it's not relevant now. And being mindful about that, and aware of how you're behaving and bringing yourself back to the now you can go. Well, yeah, that's not working for me like it worked for my Dad, why should I be doing that?

Practice mindful awareness every day



Usha 42:29
Yeah, it takes a lot of mindful awareness. And, you know, my teacher, he says, you don't even need a lot of time to change that. Sometimes you from having that thinking, to come back to mindfulness, you just need nine seconds. This is just every day, as often as you can, whenever you remember.

Usha 42:49
Just breathe in and out with intention for nine seconds. And that's all you have to do to start, you know, and then later, taking that nine seconds into a minute and a half, because if five minutes of your mind not wandering, it's actually a lot, you know, to even sit down for five minutes and go, you know, my mind is not gonna wander.

Usha 43:11
Which is why monks, you know, even after 40 years in a monastery, they're still practicing mindfulness, they're still practicing meditation. It is a lifelong practice, but just start with nine seconds a day, about that's about three deep breaths, you know, and sometimes you'll find after the second and a half breath, the mind will go, ooh, that was mindful.

Usha 43:11
That's the thinking. And it's like always trying to, it's a little game. If we look at mindfulness and emotional intelligence as a game and not like, like a chore that we have to work through another thing in life. Instead of looking at it that way, just go Okay, this is a game, it can actually be a very fun game.

Usha 43:50
Mind you want it come on, darling, come on back. Right, three deep breaths. 1 2 I'm mindful. That's the mind coming in again. Let's try again later, in five minutes, take three deep breaths, you know, and constantly pushing through the pain and making a game out of it. That's really, really important.

Bill 44:12
Yeah. I found that when I approach some people to do a meditation, they'll go I don't know how to meditate. I can't meditate. My mind always wanders. Well. That's exactly right. It's not meant to not wander. It's just meant to go wherever it goes. So that you can observe it in its environment and just see how it goes and does things.

Bill 44:36
And that will give you a lot of insights into what kind of a person you are and how you react to things and respond to things. And that's kind of like a visual because when you're meditating you do see a lot of things happening with your eyes closed, which is strange but true.

Bill 44:53
And that when I find myself doing that and seeing all the visualizations and experiencing my mind wandering. That's a really big insight into what's happening when I'm not aware of it. So when I'm not meditating, that's happening to me all the time anyway, that's how I experience my world.

Bill 45:14
But when I am meditating, it's like, I've just gone meta. And now I've just enabled myself to see how my mind kicks over and how it works. It's just for me fascinating that the mind A does that and B that I can be aware that the mind does that. And then that allows me to decode my own mind and go, Ah, okay.

Bill 45:34
All right, I thought of that, not useful. Let me think of this. Instead, I thought of that not useful. Let me think of this instead. And that's kind of how I structured my mind so that I can be positive more often and not positive way. I just say positive words. That it's actually me embodying positivity and being positive and doing positive, not just thinking positive, you know, from one perspective, it's from my entire being my entire body.

Bill 46:07
And that positivity can be in the face of very difficult times and moments. And when I had the stroke, it's like, okay, what's one good thing that's come of this? What's something good, that's happened during all this terrible time. And it could have just been that my mom came in the room at the right time.

Bill 46:26
And I haven't seen her for five days. And now she's here, you know, so that was enough. And that what's good about this is also something that I've used at the worst times, you know, in funerals, when we got a funeral, and we're thinking, how can there possibly be anything good that has come out of that?

Bill 46:45
And that good thing might be, I was blessed to be in that person's life. You know, that's how I trained my mind going in and meditating and being mindful of how it plays games, those games that you talked about. Now I can go, Okay, let's play the game. My way, the way I prefer.

Usha 47:08

Yeah, that's so powerful, really, really powerful. And in a few things that you said that really resonated, you know, when you said the word meta, that really is going beyond thought. And when we begin to understand that I am beyond thought I am beyond you know, we are beyond the sum of all our thoughts even, right, that's really going meta.

Usha 47:31
And one of the very simple techniques we can use to do that is using language. So if you're, for example, if you get a recurring thought, you know, if you're a stroke survivor, and the recurring thought is I will never recover, I will never recover, I'll never recover, right?

Usha 47:47
You take yourself into the observer mode. And you say to yourself, I am having the thought that first you can think of that sentence First, I will never recover, recover. I mean, just believe it as much as you can for 10 seconds. Okay, because stepping into that thought allows you to feel into the emotions, which we a lot of times don't want to face.

Usha 48:10
So it's facing that as well. Okay, so number one, is saying, you know, I'll never recover once you believe it for 10 seconds. And then we say, I am having the thought that I will never recover, and be using language to distance yourself. So I'm having the thought that I will never recover, I'm having the thought, I'll never recover, then take that in and believe it for 10 seconds.

Usha 48:35
And then we say I notice that I'm having the thought that I will never recover. I noticed that I'm having the thought that I will never recover. And we keep distancing ourselves and pushing ourselves away from our thought and then we can begin to really see and go, Oh, well, that's just a thought.

Usha 48:55
It's transitory guess what? I have a new thought now. So language can be very powerful. You know, and like you said, using that positive language and asking yourself, what do I want to choose instead? So choosing language that is empowering is definitely an emotional intelligence technique.

Bill 49:16

I love what you said there about distancing yourself and the different steps back. Because if, if you're a stroke survivor, listening to this, are watching this, and you've said, You'll never recover. Now, imagine you're in a situation where you are listening to another stroke survivor, say that about themselves.

Bill 49:37
And you're watching them and they don't know that you're watching them. Talk about themselves in that negative way. Would you let them say that or would you be bursting out of your socks to go to them and say, Hey, don't say that about yourself. You might recover. You don't know that.

Bill 49:53
Be more positive, you know, you wouldn't do that. So if you're watching your self, re Act. So now if you're watching yourself, react that way to support another person who thinks they won't recover, then don't speak to yourself like that, then be the person who supports you in the same way you would support your friend or another stroke survivor that came to you for advice.

Bill 50:21
That's kind of what I'm getting from that that's distancing yourself and then going, Wow, do I also behave like that to myself? Because if I do, then I'm getting in my way, just like that person is getting in their own way.

Usha 50:37
Yes, absolutely. And what you said about gratitude and I know, it's set to death, the attitude of gratitude, the attitude of gratitude. But it's not as simple as we think it is, there is so much research behind the practice of gratitude as well. And why it's training your mind now to look for the positive so that that becomes our default mode.

Gratitude as a default mode – Usha Raman



Usha 50:59
So there's some research done about the default mode network. And the more we actually train our default mode to be more positive, then we can do that a little bit more easier. Definitely. That's, you know, long story short. And coming back to gratitude is not just gratitude for yourself in your day, there was one very, in our research, I always like to quote is, this gentleman he made people write thank you notes to somebody else.

Usha 51:29
And give somebody who they thought was, should be thanked maybe was thanked, but not to the extent that you really feel write them a letter of gratitude, post it to them or give it to them personally. And that high that you get from having that letter can last up to a month.

Usha 51:48
Yeah, hopefully measured people's brains, and he realized that gratitude has that much of a lasting effect. So yeah, practicing gratitude is one of the best best ways to, you know, till today, I always say my gratitude, whenever I can, we have a little group, on Whatsapp group, and we actually send each other gratitude. So start something like that, within, you know, your own group of friends even.

Bill 52:16
I do my little gratitude practice at night before I go to bed, put my head on the pillow, no one knows I'm doing it, you can't hear it, there's no proof. Just in case, you know, I was concerned that people would catch me out being grateful. And it just basically starts off with you know, I'm thankful for the people in my life, the people I met the conversations that I had, the experiences that I had.

Bill 52:42
And even in the terrible experiences, like what was good about having that conversation with that person, or that experience or whatever, just so that, even if it was just a lesson for me, even if all i got from that was a lesson of how not to behave, or how not to accept people in the way that they treat me, or how not to engage in, in certain situations, whatever it was, I just am grateful for that. And that makes me go to sleep with a grateful mind.

Bill 53:12
And then wake up in a different zone, then, sometimes I used to go to bed in anger. And with, you know, madness and with craziness and wake up in the morning feeling like I haven't slept and like I'm exhausted, you know. So it really helps with that. And that helps heal the brain that helps heal and recover the brain.

Bill 53:33
And it helps to reduce cortisol and it gives your body an opportunity to relax and to be comfortable and to ease. And, it's extremely useful and doesn't cost anything, and you don't need to be anywhere specific to do it. You can just do it when you're on the bus going somewhere or on the train.

Bill 53:58
And it's so easy. And it helps to support emotional intelligence, it helps to get you to that point where you're connecting parts of your body that perhaps were disconnected for many years, because you're just a big head on shoulders, you know, and all you ever did was use your head to get through life.

Bill 54:17
And now you're starting to connect. Because gratitude comes from the heart, it doesn't come from the head. And you're starting to connect all these systems again, so that they start working and talking to each other. So that you're not just a big head on shoulders.

Usha 54:33
Yeah, we always have to remember, you know, like coming back to how we are emotional beings as well as thinking beings, you know, one doesn't really exist without the other and, and if we can embrace that and, and body with more mindfulness and not being too stuck in the thinking, and, you know, just

ruminating about things really Yeah, there's so much we can do for ourselves.

Usha 55:03
And especially I think we, you know, people have gone through something as major as a stroke, to not want to rush. That's the main thing. Like I said, you know, we have this future projection of ourselves. And we think we want to get back in a hurry. And this doesn't even have to be people with stroke, we see it in everyone all the time. We're always in that doing mode.

Usha 55:26
Yeah, it's good to have goals, set your goals, and that's fine. But then later on, enjoy the process of getting there with the knowledge that everything is impermanent anyway. You know, and not letting that impermanence impede your journey, but allowing it to influence your journey more positively.

Bill 55:46
Yeah, I love it. And if you're somebody who's listening to this podcast, and you're new into these types of conversations, but they resonated with you have these types of conversations more often, with more people, find out where those people are, connect with them, connect with Usha, connect with myself and have these conversations more often.

Bill 56:07
So that you can start getting used to the language and used to the feelings and used to the way that you need to be to experience mindfulness and an emotional intelligence. And that way, you'll start to grow this other part of you that can coexist with who you already are.

Bill 56:29
Because not once did Usha. And I say that you need to stop being who you are. We're just saying you need to bring in this little other beautiful piece, and enhance who you already are, which is awesome already.

Self-compassion technique – Usha Raman



Usha 56:43
Absolutely, and we spoke about self-compassion quite a bit. And, you know, for a lot of people, that's could be a strange thing that could be like, Oh, how do I even start, so if you are listening, and you feel that, oh, gosh, I don't even know where to start with self-compassion. I'll just share one very simple technique, which I call the labeling technique.

Usha 57:04
It's a meditation technique that I have on my things one of the meditations have on my YouTube, I believe, as well, which I just started to put stuff up. So look for the labeling technique, but I'll just very quickly describe it is just focusing on your breath. So when you breathe in, you say rising and allow your belly to rise and expand.

Usha 57:25
And when you breathe out, you say falling and allow your belly to contract. Okay? Because you're pushing the lungs out. So you really breathe in your belly all the way you can. And then you breathe in, you go rising, when you breathe out, you go falling, but the mind will wander.

Usha 57:39
When the mind wanders, Just say the word drifting. Okay, and we're not saying that it's a bad thing, or a good thing. And we just say drifting, drifting, drifting, and then coming back to rising, falling. If darling come back is too difficult for you to say, then just see drifting, drifting, and make sure the tone of the drifting is kind. It shouldn't be ah drifiting. It should just be rising, falling, rising, falling, drifting, drifting, rising, falling, rising, falling. So that's a very quick tip.

Bill 58:16
On that note, I'm grateful for you and grateful for you accepting to be on the podcast, I really appreciate the fact that you came on not knowing me much, and sharing what you know about mindfulness and emotional intelligence. And that you did that and that's going to make a difference to the people listening and it's going to hopefully create curiosity in them to go further with this idea and see how they can benefit from it.

Usha 58:47
Thank you so much, Bill. It was such a pleasure to meet you. And I'm glad I said yes. And what a wonderful job you're doing so all the best to you.

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Intro 59:11
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