

Intracranial Brain Hemorrhage - Christina DeVille

Christina DeVille was giving her dogs a bath and when she stood up felt disoriented and dizzy, moments later she collapsed in the toilet and crawled on the ground to get to the phone and call for help.

Socials:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/christinadeville/>

<https://www.instagram.com/christinadevillefreedom/>

<https://www.drivenlv.org/>

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Transcription:

Christina 0:00

It could happen to anyone and there's no genetic there wasn't anything. It just was a random intracranial brain hemorrhage. So I want to emphasize that it can happen to anyone.

Bill 0:12

And do you feel that that randomness was something contributed to you by your lifestyle and the kind of way that you went about life?

Christina 0:19

I was a ticking time bomb. Without me realizing that like, I wasn't shifting, and I think I was continuing a lifestyle that was not able to continue in that manner. And this needed to happen for me to reset, reevaluate, you know, repurpose, and, you know, continue just developing and being an amazing person, and, having a better, more impactful and enjoyable life.

Intro 0:54

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

Bill 1:07

Hello, and welcome to recovery after stroke, a podcast full of answers, advice and practical tools for stroke survivors to help you take back your life after a stroke and build a stronger future.

Bill 1:18

I'm your host three-time stroke survivor, Bill Gasiamis. After my life was turned upside down, and I went from being an active father to being stuck in hospital, I knew if I wanted to get back to the life I loved before, my recovery was up to me.

Bill 1:33

After years of researching and discovering I learned how to heal my brain and rebuild a healthier and happier life than I ever dreamed possible. And now I've made it my mission to empower other stroke survivors like you to recover faster, achieve your goals and take back the freedom you deserve.

Bill 1:50

If you enjoyed this episode and want more resources, accessible training and hands on support, check out my recovery after stroke membership community created especially for stroke survivors and caregivers. This is your clear pathway to transform your symptoms, reduce your anxiety, and navigate your journey to recovery with confidence.

Introduction - Christina DeVille



Bill 2:09

Head to recoveryafterstroke.com to find out more after this episode. But for now, let's dive right in to today's chat. This is Episode 160. And my guest today is Christina DeVille. A self confessed workaholic who experienced an intracranial brain hemorrhage in 2020, collapsing in her toilet and dragging herself to her phone to call for help. Christina DeVille Welcome to the podcast.

Christina 2:41

Thank you for having me, Bill.

Bill 2:43

Thanks for reaching out and letting me know that you're out there and you need to connect and that you need to share your story. It's really, really important that people share their story and don't feel that their story is them making it about themselves or anything like that. It's really cathartic to do that. And it feels for a lot of people who have been on the podcast, really good to get it off their chest. So tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

Christina 3:12

Yeah, and that's exactly the motivation when I reached out I mean, and basically like a testimonial for your podcast. I mean, I've literally mainlined like listening to your podcast, and it was such a great outreach of getting some, you know, it's funny, like you just you kind of want to hear a validation, right of like what people are experiencing to see to validate what you're experiencing.

Christina 3:35

And, I found that so great. But then I also identify, like things that helped me that

could hopefully help others. So yeah, so that was great. So my experience with stroke was April 23rd of 2020. I had an intracranial brain hemorrhage.

Christina 3:58

It was quite crazy. I remember everything vividly. like it was yesterday. Not sure if you recall where our world was in the state of the world on April 23 of 2020. About a month prior was when we had the shutdown.

Christina 4:19

So I am the Senior Vice President of a huge national residential solar company. So as you can imagine, it was very stressful. You know, we're having daily evening meetings at 9pm every night, trying to game plan, what we're going to do, and me overseeing, you know, part of a team seeing, you know, the sales department, sales kind of rules all right?

Christina 4:48

So as long as we have sales coming in, it keeps everything in motion. Well, when you have all these limitations. You have, you know, things closing down, you know, states shutting down, everything was just shutting down overnight. You have to start going, huh you got to stay healthy, which equals you got to, you know, lay people off, etc, etc.

Christina 5:10

Now I had no business taking on the stress that I did, right but, you know, I, you know, my company that I work with is just been my baby, it's been kind of something I've helped build for five years. So I just took on a lot of the stress that I probably shouldn't have, in combination with the fact that I live in Las Vegas, Nevada, is extremely, extremely, extremely dry here.

Christina 5:41

That was a shock to the system when you're coming from California, right? Unbeknownst to me, I wasn't really understanding that the difference of dehydration and the impacts that can really have on your system, right? And then, you know, to keep going, I was drinking energy drinks.

Christina 6:05

Specifically, there was one five hour energy drink that I was drinking more than once a day. And you know, you don't see enough we don't hear enough is these types of things, right? Water, what other forms of liquid are you consuming?

What's in those liquids, right? Energy drinks are filled with B6 and zinc, which are natural blood thinners.

Christina 6:31

And a lot of people aren't aware of that. I wasn't even aware that I'm taking natural least I thought vitamins where you know, they're basically what my hematologist came to understand is I think I took a ridiculous cocktail of blood thinners. So it was a trifecta in 24 hours before my accident, probably the most stressful day to date in work.

Symptoms of Intracranial Brain Hemorrhage

Christina 6:58

So you have stress, you have dehydration, and I just took a cocktail of blood thinners. And that trifecta basically hit me. I was literally doing nothing I was giving my dogs a bath. So I was bent down over my bathtub giving my dog a bath. When I went to try to stand up, all of a sudden I felt disoriented and dizzy.

Christina 7:25

Didn't think anything of it. I just thought, huh, I must have stood up too fast. And then there was this weird sensation from my right hip to my right toe. And it was like buzzing. It felt kind of like buzzy right? And again, in my brand I'm thinking this is you know, I must have just gotten vertigo. This must be vertigo. I don't know, you know? And then I just remember not feeling okay. And then I literally decided great idea. Let's take a shower.

Christina 8:05

So I decided to take a shower, thinking it was going to like wash it away. No big deal. And it wasn't going away. So by the shower, and then I don't know what I was thinking I decided to put the dog in the living room. And mind you I live alone, in a high rise, condo, and I put the dogs in the living room and I decided you know what, I'm gonna try to lay down.

Christina 8:29

The minute I put my head on the pillow, there was just this voice in my head that was like, You know what don't fall asleep. So I literally got up and I was like, Huh, I need to use the restroom. So from my bed, to the restroom, probably like 30 feet, maybe the physical feet.

Christina 8:52

And I'm like literally swaying back and forth to the restroom. And I'm just thinking, wow, this vertigo sucks like this is crazy. You know what I mean? So then when I went to finally sit down the restroom, it all stopped. So I'm like, cool, it went away. So in my restroom, a little bit in front of the toilet is a wall.

Christina 9:18

So when I went to go stand up very confidently. My right leg wasn't stable, and I went headfirst on the left side directly into the wall. And luckily, I think it would have been worse if I didn't break the fall with my left shoulder. So it's head, left shoulder. I rolled on to the ground and I go something's not right.

Christina 9:49

So then I had to my survival skills kicked in and I had to crawl back to the side of my bed where my phone was. But everything was is still somewhat working. It hadn't really gone out yet, but I could feel something was happening.

Bill 10:09

Were things sort of just switching off?

Christina 10:12

Like physically not verbally yet. But physically. So I was able to luckily, I mean, this what's great about sometimes your survival mode, right? Like I was able to crawl from my bathroom. Back to the side of the bed where my phone was literally the minute I grabbed my phone, the whole right side went out.

Christina 10:35

So I could only get up from here, I can literally only lift up my head. And my left arm was working to be able to grab my phone. So I'm sitting there on the ground I'm like, This definitely must be a sciatic problem. There's something wrong with my back.

Bill 10:58

That's me. That's me all over again.

Christina 11:01

So I was like, Okay, I'm gonna call my dad. Right. Have him come get me. It'll be fine. Call my dad. He doesn't answer. Call my brother. I'm like, hey, I need you to leave work. Come get me. I think there's something wrong with my back. I'm on

the ground. I can't get up. And he goes, yeah you shouldn't be calling me, you should for sure call like the ambulance.

Christina 11:28

And I was like, No, no, no, you're crazy. I don't need to call an ambulance. It's not that big of a deal. I want to call someone else since you're not available. Call my dad again, doesn't answer that call my stepmom doesn't answer. Finally call my sister who is a nurse.

Christina 11:45

She's an RN, so I'm like, okay, I'll call my sister, she was in California. And I'm telling her, Hey, I think I either have vertigo or a sciatic problem, tell her what happened. And that I can't get off the ground. And she's like, that is neither. She's like, you either call the ambulance right now, or I'm going to call the ambulance for you.

Christina 12:09

Now to get an ambulance, to my building up to my house, it's not going to be easy. I'm locked in my room on the ground in a robe I have two dogs in the living room. And they need to come upstairs breaking through my front door to get access to me.

Christina 12:27

So then I finally had to call my front desk. And I think that is what kept me alive is that I forced myself to keep my brain going right? Called my front desk and I said, Hey, I'm getting ready to I'm completely coherent still, I'm getting ready to call the ambulance, I'm on the ground in my master bedroom, and I can't get up. I need you to let them up, break into my front door. Not let my two dogs get out of the out of the house and walk them to my master bedroom when I'm laying on the ground. They're like, Okay.

Bill 13:05

Let me intervene before we go to the next phase. I'm sitting here, and I'm actually having a physiological response to what you're saying. I think, yeah, I'm going back to my experience. I think I'm going back to what I did all the dumb things, all the things that convinced me that nothing was wrong, that I needed to continue working, that I needed to go about business in your role as Senior Vice President, your head probably does the majority of the hard lifting.

Bill 13:36

There's not so much time for emotion. There's not so much time for you know, instinct, it's all about compartmentalizing. It's all about process. It's all about getting from one point to the next, whatever that point is. And it sounds like, that's your skill, right? So what you do is you've come up with scenarios that you can solve. And hopefully those scenarios work out correctly at the end of the day.

Bill 14:02

But you've never dealt with a stroke before. So you don't know these brand new experiences, and you're just making it up as you go. And you sound like a politician. The ones that just make it up as they go. Oh, yeah, let's try this now, that didn't work. Yeah, that was our fault, that was somebody else's fault, let's try this, and so on. And finally, it sounds like it took ages. It sounds like it took hours excruciatingly long how long did it take?

Christina 14:29

I honestly don't remember, but it felt like a decade. I mean, in that moment. I mean, I just knew once I couldn't get up. I knew that there was a series of things that I had to do to make sure I got people to me, and I didn't pass out. So yeah, it gets much better. So then.

Bill 14:56

Did they get to the front door finally? Did they get to your apartment for door?

Christina 15:02

Yes, but before that even happened right after I got phone with the ambulance, I mean, if you would be, the shock of how many people I wasn't able to call before the ambulance before I even got into the ambulance, I was still making phone calls in the ambulance.

Christina 15:19

Because I felt like I needed to inform because I work remote right? It's COVID, I needed people who are very important to understand where I was and what was happening and where I was going to end up.

Bill 15:34

Work people as well?

Christina 15:36

Work people as well. So the minute I got off the phone with the ambulance, I recalled my sister back, I called one of my friends. And then I call a coworker. And I was extremely calm. Don't ask me how, and I'm like, hey, I need you to do me a favor. He's like, what's that, and I'm like, this is gonna sound scary, but I need you to stay calm.

Christina 15:58

This is what I said, I need to stay calm. I tell him what happened. Like, I need you to inform our CEO or CRO, you know, people that are within our department. I think I had a meeting or like a video conference coming up with all of them. And I'm like, I need you to tell them what's happening and where I'm going to end up.

Don't Pass Out

Christina 16:20

So he wanted which I give him a lot of admiration. He too, didn't want me to pass out before the ambulance came, so he was like this is what I want you to do is I want to stay on the phone with you until the ambulance arrived. I said okay, so stay on the phone until the ambulance arrives.

Christina 16:36

Once they come become in, you know I'm on a gurney and getting wheeled out. And at that point, I'd already sent text messages to my dad and my stepmom. So you know, we're getting downstairs, I'm in the gurney getting into the the ambulance, my parents show up in the roundabout, as I'm getting in the ambulance.

Christina 16:59

Now, I don't know how the hospital situation is where you guys are. But at that time when COVID first broke out, it was extremely strict, like really, really strict. You know, my dad wanted to get in the ambulance. And they wouldn't let him. He's got a short temper.

Christina 17:18

So I'm sitting there telling him please do not get upset. Do not do anything, again I don't know how I just it's pure survival instinct. So then get in the ambulance. They take me to a hospital. That was amazing. The minute I got wheeled into the hospital. I literally I don't really remember anything. That was April 23. Didn't

really remember anything till May 1.

Bill 17:50

All right. Let's pause there for a sec. So let me just update you with my level of stupidity as well. Right. And I say that lovingly because it's not stupid, it's something else is going on for us to try and work out right? So I went to the hospital, I got diagnosed, I rang my wife, I lied to her, I told her I didn't get any results yet, because it's too late in the evening, like it was 11:30 at night, come and see me in the morning.

Bill 18:20

And in the morning, they'll probably have a doctor come around and give us the results. So she was at home with the boys. I didn't want to startle her. I didn't want her to have a bad night's sleep. So the next morning, she came I gave her the bad news. I told her that I lied. And then I rang my client, and I said to him, I've got to tell you something, I can't come to work today.

Bill 18:45

And I started bawling my eyes I started crying. And I said to him, like there's something wrong in my brain. You need to take over the job that we're doing there's 15 staff people going to be there all different trades and services. And we have to do this in one day. You have to do it. I can't do it because I can't get there.

Bill 19:03

And that's how my day started phone calls work all the important stuff. You know, I was doing all of that stuff. And then I told my mom, I'll tell my wife to ring my mum and dad. But don't tell them try not to tell them what was wrong or something like that. Okay, so they kind of lied. She kind of lied to them. My dad didn't take his blood pressure medication, one of the days that he was coming to hospital.

Bill 19:37

So he collapses in the rear of their home in the rear yard falls down and this guy is six foot 1 or 6 foot 2. And he's heavy real heavy is about 150 kilos which I think is you know close to it's above a couple of 150 pounds or something I don't know what 250 pounds. He's huge. And as he collapses, my mum rings the ambulance.

Bill 20:05

They bring him to the hospital where I'm at. My mom comes up to see me. And I

said, Where's dad? He's downstairs, I said, Okay, well tell him to come up she said well, no, he's in the ER. And he fell over at home, and he hurt himself. And he's in hospital. I said, What do you mean? I need to see him, take me down to see my Dad, I want to see where my dad is/

Intro 20:32

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

Intro 20:49

Doctors will explain things that obviously, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask. If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation, stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you.

Intro 21:11

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

Bill 21:35

I go down I see my dad he's in hospital.

Christina 21:37

They let you go down. Wow. Okay, yeah.

Bill 21:39

This was way before COVID. I think somebody wheeled me down. I was still walking at the time. I can't remember exactly what happened. I go down. I see my dad and he's lying with all the heart monitors and everything and I'm like, What the hell is going on? What is going on here?

Bill 21:56

Everyone is just collapsing around me. And I had that thought of trying to keep

everybody else calm because I had a feeling that they were all going to turn to water. And they did almost turn to water. So anyway, you're now in hospital. That was me. I just wanted to let you know how similar.

Christina 22:16

I was so worried about stressing people out with what was happening with me. Other than worrying about what the heck was happening with me. Like literally, I thought my Dad, I'm not kidding, I thought my dad was gonna have a heart attack. Same scenario, I thought he was gonna end up.

Christina 22:35

First of all, I thought he was really gonna have a heart attack, or he was gonna get arrested. Like, there was just one or the other because he was not, you know, they're telling him no, left and right. He couldn't come in the ER, he couldn't come like, at that moment, I can see him he's having a meltdown.

Christina 22:51

And then next thing, you know, I'm out. And I wake up, still don't know what's happening. No clue. You know, I finally wake up. And it's like, you know, I am totally plastic from my head to my toe on the right side. Can't move. It is the beyond craziest experience, ever that you could try to describe to someone and there is just so many things that have happened at that moment.

Christina 23:24

I have a pounding headache. My entire body feels like it's 105 because they couldn't figure out the blood pressure and my heart rate at the time did you know that you're kind of testing things medication with you wise. And it was just so overwhelming that you just you know, I'm finally getting told like what's happening? I'm getting told how I behaved from April 23 to may 1, right?

Christina 23:58

Because there was a series of things that happened leading up to that. And you know, and it's just crazy. You know, when I was finally told what happened, I didn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. Because it's gonna sound silly. I thought if you had a stroke, it meant you had a heart attack.

Christina 24:21

Now, mind you, February of 2020, I attended a charity event for the Go Red American Red Cross event where they had a full on thing about strokes and

women, you know, being more victims to strokes. I was too busy eating lunch and chatting up and networking that I didn't even pay attention.

Unhealthy Lifestyle

Christina 24:39

Now I'm a survivor, you know, and so it was kind of shocking, you know, and then crazy, it's gonna sound bad I had a really unhealthy work life balance. I'm the first to admit it. It was horrible. That in that moment when you have a sense of like you lost control. I had no movements in my body, my boss cut me off from work.

Christina 25:06

So I didn't have work emails. I didn't know at the time, he told people not to text me. You know, I mean, there was all this stuff that happened that I wasn't aware of. So I finally am planning all this out. When I'm waking up, and I lose it.

Bill 25:20

You were taking it personally? Are you getting upset?

Christina 25:23

I did, I got upset.

Bill 25:25

Wow, that they took it from you or that you just couldn't do it? Which one?

Christina 25:31

There was, internally, there was this sense of loss of control. And it left me in that moment, it was by far the most vulnerable to date I'd ever been in my life, and I hated it with a passion.

Bill 25:49

If I told you back then if I asked you, how did you identify, you would say I identify as the Senior Vice President, with that comes a whole bunch of stuff. And if your work life balance is out of whack, and the only way you identify is with the amount of people that call me the amount of emails I get, my responsibilities, the types of things that I do. And that's taken away overnight, your identity takes a massive hit. Like, yeah, who am I like, What do I do? What is this? How can you take this from me? I need this, this is what keeps me sane, alive.

Christina 26:25

The irony of what you just said, is probably what verbatim I said, so I called my boss, just bawling. I was so upset. And I was like, How can you do this to me? Why are you doing this to me? And again, he's like, what do you Christina? Like do you understand the severity of what you're going through?

Christina 26:48

You were still hemorrhaging, is not stopped. You are so sensitive, like, please, trust me, everything is going to be fine. You're fine. You need to concentrate on getting better. But it's crazy. What I thought, you know, and like, he sat there and prayed with me over the phone, and got me to calm down. But yeah, I literally just thought I didn't want to expect what was happening whatsoever.

Bill 27:21

It's fairly early on. Accepting it is to almost admit defeat, and I think not accepting it is one of those things that helps us survive, would you agree does that kind of.

Christina 27:33

I don't know, so what was interesting about that was, the more I would actually call it negative feedback. I was getting my body with the way I was responding, the more things would not work properly. I was that sensitive, where, you know, it's just things my headaches would come back like I couldn't sleep there's so everything was just still out of whack.

Christina 28:03

And I would get mad. So you don't realize in the moment that you're going against yourself. Like the only person that's being affected by this is you right? So my aha moment, which is actually kind of not funny, but it is, was in the hospital. They give you a series of medicine, right? So once they take out like the IV they give you something to help you sleep.

Christina 28:32

Well, in that moment, it was maybe day two that they had given me Ambien and my aha moment was the second night they gave me Ambien. It was probably three o'clock in the morning. Mind you, I'm in my bed they had the railings, right? Im plastered on one side. And then there's, you know, the door the bathroom like pretty decent way, right?

Christina 28:58

I woke up on the ground in between my front door and my bed. Had no knowledge how I got there. And I thought instantly I thought you know what? I could have fell and hit my head. And I had no knowledge how I got there. That was my aha moment. That was my moment where I changed my mindset and accepted what was happening.

Christina 29:22

And I literally just said, okay, you're gonna accept this happening. But this is what you're going to do. You're going to refocus everything into making sure that you somehow some way walk out of the hospital. And so then after that, I just changed my attitude. I prayed a lot. I just listened to meditations. Like I don't know if you've ever saw the movie Kill Bill?

Bill 29:48

Come on it's my favorite one of my favorite films.

Christina 29:52

Okay, so you remember the moment where she's talking to her leg?

Bill 29:55

In the truck.

Christina 29:56

And she like move! That was me. I'm literally giving feedback to my body just saying you gotta move, you gotta move, you gotta move.

Neuroplasticity

Bill 30:08

I can relate to that a lot. So your analogy, the Kill Bill movie analogy is it's complete and utter Hollywood bullshit, but that's fine. That's the whole purpose of that movie. But it actually stems from it derives from the reality of neuroplasticity and how it works. And if you imagine yourself doing something that's firing off the same neurons and the same cells in your brain as if you were actually doing it.

Bill 30:40

That's why meditation is so amazing. So when I was in hospital, I couldn't use my

left side. And I had to learn how to walk again and use my left arm again, as well took about a month before they discharged me. But when I had downtime in between rehabilitation sessions.

Bill 30:59

I was imagining myself walking, and meditating on that and listening to music while I was doing that in the dark, and then basically going through that process, so that I can get to that point of when I get to actually get to walk. It's not fresh. My mind has seen this before. And then it's just taking over in the physical way. So that whole thing that you did is what I did.

Bill 31:36

And what she didn't Kill Bill. It's a real thing. Like it does actually create neurons and connections and pathways. So it's a profound experience to go through that and experience it, but it's really better to know about it. So I knew about it. And because I knew about it, I actually allocated my time, that downtime, instead of watching, you know, daytime soap movies, or some junk like that.

Bill 32:06

I allocated that time to YouTube and Google and just researched, walking again, neurons, growing my brain, like all sorts of things. So that's, I can relate to it a lot.

Christina 32:20

I literally, so I had trouble visualizing because my brain was just, like I was struggling with memories, big time at that moment. So I was like, Okay, I can't see this. I can't see myself running, I can't see myself walking. I'm gonna ask my friends to send me any videos they possibly have of me, dancing, walking, whatever, so I can remember what I look like.

Christina 32:47

And that helped me like I just, I don't even know how I came up with that. But I did. You know, it's funny, when you say the downtime, my door was directly across from where they had the PT. Yep. And I made sure everybody knew my agenda, within the OT, and the occupational occupational therapists and physical therapists.

Christina 33:08

You know, historically speaking, when you have people in that, in that realm,

majority of them are going to be older, you know, at the time of 41. And, unfortunately, not a lot of them are very motivated. So to get in the PT and OT, when they saw how motivated I was, I was like, listen, I don't care what I'm doing. If you see that I'm in my room, and there's downtime, please grab me, please hook me up to the mem machines and do the shot because that the machine actually is what helped me get my arm back first.

Christina 33:44

The second treatment that they did each finger. And that is also crazy. I don't think people understand when you go flaccid, and this stuff needs to wake back up. It's not like your whole arm coming back, your whole leg coming back. It's like each individual finger, it was just, I just changed the way I looked at it as almost like a curiosity. And it became kind of a solution. Like you said, solution thing where I'm like, Huh, this is really cool.

Christina 34:17

You know, each thing had to come back. So each part had to come back. You know, I had there was a period where I had aphasia, you know, and you know, it's the whole thing it just became became this thing where I started to do other three searches like if it came my thing where I just wanted to know so much more about it and how I could get through my recovery.

Christina 34:38

And another thing that was really great about physical therapy, which were the muscle memory comes in. I had done Pilates in the past three years. I got fortunate there was two ladies at the hospital who were pts but had a Pilates background. So once they identified that I could do Pilates, they were using that I could do the the individual, you know, leg work and stuff like that which I contribute to what really helped me in my recovery. Like big time.

Bill 35:11

Yeah. I mean it sounds like you just took responsibility.

Christina 35:15

I did. And I was hospitalized from April 23 to may 29. That was a long time by myself with a lot of people say how horrible it was you were by yourself. And I thought it was the greatest thing since sliced bread, like the fact that I had I'm an empath. The fact that I had no, it was uninterrupted, solely focused on myself.

And people that had that were there to help me was exactly what I needed. I don't know if my recovery would have been the same If I would have been allowed to have visitors.

Bill 35:54

Distractions, and yeah, negative feelings of emotions and all that kind of stuff. There's certainly some people you don't want to have at your hospital bed. Absolutely. If you could get rid of them. That'd be great. There's some that you do there's some that you don't know where you're coming from.

Bill 36:08

But it sounds like you're a solutions oriented person as well. It sounds like you looked for, here are the problems. Well, there must be solutions for them. And let's just run with it. And that's kind of me as well, my work meant that I just always fixed problems for people. So I just did what came naturally it sounds similar to what you're doing. You're going well, here's a problem. Focus. Thank you very much. Give me time and let's work it out.

Christina 36:40

Yeah, in the defense of the people that you know, that were there for me, that really leveled up. They had every reason to panic. I mean, there was a time where I came close to not living like there was a moment you know what I mean? And then you I think I listened to your podcast about yourself where you were diagnosed with AVM correct?

Bill 37:03

Yeah.

Christina DeVille Was Misdiagnosed



Christina 37:05

So early on, when I was hemorrhaging with the first neurologist, he almost misdiagnosed me, saying I had an AVM then, saying I had to do surgery. Well, I wasn't cooperating. I told them. There's no way they're touching my brain. I don't remember this. So as a byproduct of that they I don't want to say forced, I think at forced, I was in no right mind frame for them to try to get me to sign over a power of attorney.

Christina 37:39

So they had my sister come out to try to force me to sign a power of attorney which I did ultimately, in case they did the surgery, and I didn't come out okay. Luckily, I created enough noise. My sister created enough noise to where we got another neurologist who waited for me to get a you know, I don't know. Did you have angiograms at all?

Bill 38:03

Yes, through the groin.

Christina 38:05

That sucks by the way.

Bill 38:07

Uh huh. Big time.

Christina 38:09

I had three.

Bill 38:11

Wow, I had one. That's enough.

Christina 38:14

Yeah not fun. And mind you it was okay because I didn't feel anything at first, right? Like cool, legs numb, we're all good. When that leg wakes up. Holy cow I was in excruciating pain, right? But so anyways, luckily, the second neurologist who was fantastic was like, he shouldn't have even diagnosed you for this. You were hemorrhaging like crazy. He can't tell.

Christina 38:39

So now, after this whole time I had, you know, a ton of MRI, a ton of CAT scans a ton of you know, three angiograms. We've identified I didn't have an AVM, but how scary is that where you could get misdiagnosed or something like that? And they want to go in they talk about radiation. I mean, that's scary stuff.

Bill 39:00

Yeah, I had an AVM and because of the bleeding, they couldn't actually tell it was an AVM. So they even told me that it might be cancerous. It might be a tumor and all that kind of stuff. And I'm just, I'm like far out. Okay, whatever. I didn't know what to say. So it took them actually took them two years to definitively isolate it and confirm that it was an AVM and that perhaps it needed to come out over those two years. It bled out twice.

Bill 39:33

And then it was micro-bleeding the entire time. But the only way they could tell was when the blood vessel decreased in when the clot decreased in size enough as to not interfere with the MRI. That was the first time they could tell. And the first hospital I was at the doctors were extremely indecisive, and they weren't doing enough to allay my concerns about the other diagnosis, the potentially cancer one.

Bill 40:08

And I felt really strange about it. So I sacked them and I went to another hospital. But yeah, for two years, they didn't touch my head either. It was about almost three years after the first bleed that they had. Yeah, so we didn't know. And I didn't even know that that was a stroke. I didn't even know that it was a hemorrhagic stroke. Like I didn't know, they didn't tell me for two years.

Christina 40:35

I would argue with everybody and correct them when they would try to say I had a stroke. Because I did not want to accept that I had a stroke. I mean, I'm a pretty strong minded person. I literally was like, I didn't have a stroke. I had intracranial brain damage and ABH it's different. I corrected everyone, and then, I'll never forget the day that I finally accepted it. I cried and cried and cried and cried.

Bill 41:08

You said you were crying and crying, accepting?

Christina 41:12

Yeah, the vulnerability part. I'm not going to sugarcoat it. I know, people think that that's like a thing. Like I fought tooth and nail against myself in the whole environment of dealing with the fact that I was so vulnerable, was crushing to me. I know, that sounds really crazy.

Christina 41:31

But I would cry spontaneously, I would have numerous phone calls with people where I was just like, I don't, I'm so uncomfortable. This is so uncomfortable for me to be this vulnerable. And, you know, it took a lot of therapy and everything else to finally look at it as like a superpower.

Christina 41:52

You know what I mean? Like, it's just so crazy how, you know, we do this to ourselves, we just get built like this. Like, you know, one of the things I love about your podcast, which is also something that the world should really dissect is you have a lot of A type people who are workaholics who are having strokes.

Bill 42:15

No kidding, that's a massive risk factor.

Christina 42:19

Like that is not discussed enough. In my mind. Like that is just, it's just so it's so so crazy, is the other thing I wanted to ask you to which I've tried to listen to a lot of them. I don't know if you've had people who had an intracranial brain hemorrhage, because I haven't gotten to all of them. And then my big question that I'm curious about, I'm left handed. You know, I like to say that I'm ambidextrous.

Christina 42:48

But let's be honest, if the stroke would have affected my left side, it would have been a game changer. Do you? Do you see a theme across the people you've interviewed where they've been right handed, and their left side wasn't affected or left handed. And they're, you know, I mean, they're not affected. But you know, they had the numbness happen on the left side, even though the right handed, they had the numbness covered on the right side, even though they're left handed.

Bill 43:16

I haven't seen a theme have definitely come across people who lost ability in their most dominant hand. And then they had to learn how to use their other hand to write and do things but I haven't seen a theme, but I know where you're going with the possibility that perhaps it happens on one side.

Bill 43:32

Now, what's interesting for me, is that my right side. So this is something that I've concluded is my right side tends to be the side where things go wrong on. My blade was on my right side, right? Yeah, right, a thyroid nodule on my right handed. Yeah, and I'm right handed.

Bill 43:54

And I have a couple of issues that are related to my right side my entire life. And they tended to play out more, I've noticed the more than anything else. Now. Maybe it's just a coincidence. I don't know. Maybe somebody else listening out there. might have had a similar experience. I don't know.

Bill 44:12

But I know where you're coming from. Like I get what you're saying. Also, with the type A situation, that type A stuff. I mean, the little events that happen in our lives, slowly shape us and then before you know it, I don't think you're a type A personality at five years old. But before you know it, you get shaped I think you move into that space.

Christina 44:40

Maybe about 10.

Bill 44:42

Maybe, maybe you move into that space at some point. But what's interesting

about that is that the World Stroke Organization says something like about 85% or 90% of strokes are preventable. So most of the strokes that are occurring were causing to ourselves now with an AVM, it's likely that the AVM might bleed so it's genetic.

Gaining Emotional Intelligence

Bill 45:07

But I did a hell of a lot a hell of a good job to create the perfect storm around it, working too much smoking, drinking, but not excessively, not sleeping enough, not eating properly, being angry all the bloody time. And that meant that most of the time I was getting angry was because I haven't I didn't have emotional intelligence.

Bill 45:33

I used to take things personally even when kids did something, which was just kid stuff, I take it personally, and go nuts and lose my shit over it. It wasn't until the stroke and my brain switched off that the emotional side of me, the vulnerability side of me kicked in. And I started doing heart work, I started doing emotional intelligence upgrades.

Bill 46:00

And then I was able to go you know what that kid who is my teenage son now is not being an asshole. He's just being a teenager, stop taking it so personally, and start apologizing for being an idiot. And that's what moved me from going back to the old behaviors that were treating my body really terribly and affecting it. And I wasn't noticing how it was tearing down and wearing down my body.

Bill 46:33

So one of the big shifts for me was that becoming vulnerable, and brave enough to admit I was wrong, to apologize and not accept an apology back. And to just make it so that it was about other people. And it wasn't about me, me me all the time. And I realized my wife sometimes goes through terribly shit days. And it's not about me, it's about her.

Bill 47:03

And I've got to give her space to just deal with what she's dealing with, and get over what she's dealing with, in her own way and stop pushing myself on her. And

it was, these are my biggest lessons, this is the thing that has moved my recovery on further because my personality is similar, but it has vulnerability, and emotion in it now where before it didn't have it.

Christina 47:28

It is the most amazing thing for me to like, literally tell people that now like I'm okay, I'm super vulnerable. Like, there's no like this thing, it's it just the delivery now is just calmer and the way it comes out. You know, I wasn't so much meaning me, it was just, you know, it was the taking things to heart.

Christina 47:49

Like when you were I remember vividly my chest burning, when it came to certain things. And that was part of what was eventually building inside of me. I remember not breathing correctly, I developed being a clavicle breather, which was causing contributing author to my migraines.

Christina 48:11

So I had to change so many things to try to make sure that I had never had to experience these things again, right. You know, I would definitely was very reactive when it came to stress, like when it came to work stuff and very dominant and very, you know, I had no business getting emotionally attached to outcomes that I had no control over whatsoever.

Christina 48:32

You know, couple of things, feeling up to it, which I don't know how I do believe there has to be a connection. To me having a serious health issue that required me to shift. I had a series of things that happen, you know, throughout my life that helped me develop being having mental and emotional fortitude for the most part, right. You know, I had a lot of trauma and a lot of loss. And one of them being my mom, I lost my mom in 2009.

Christina 49:03

And I didn't subconsciously realize how that was really affecting me. As a person. I was a walking shell of a person so work became replaced, you know, that unconditional everything. It became my, my, my parent, it became my child that became my, my relationship. It became it feel I just didn't want to deal with it. And that became my center of attention.

Christina 49:30

And that was it. That was all I saw. And I didn't realize that so when you say you apologize to people, I literally went back to probably a few ex boyfriends and I apologize. Well, I was like, I I'm sorry. I was just an empty shell. And I'm you know, I apologize for how I showed up. You know what I mean? Like I didn't realize until I lost my until I had to have.

Christina 49:56

So it's funny I make a joke that I think my mom was sick of my behavior. And then I wasn't shifting on my own, that she finally said, guess what? I'm gonna knock inside your head. And I was an athlete growing up, I've done a lot in my life, I have never had something physically take me down. So when you physically cannot move, you have no choice but to face everything. And that was the greatest gift I could ever ask for.

Bill 50:29

It's so weird to hear you say that. It's my experience, too. And lots of stroke survivors say the same thing. And it's just, I don't know. But that's the way I see that the head switching off with the bleeds in my brain made it so that my body could come back to life and talk and let me know what was going on. And I hadn't paid attention to it. And I still take things personally. And my emotional experience was just shit.

Bill 50:57

You said something to me, I would erupt. Yeah, I would be personally offended and all that kind of stuff. And it's like, wow, I don't know what that was about. So now what I apologize for is my behavior. And I just say, Look, I'm sorry for the way that I behaved in that situation.

Bill 51:16

I'm not taking it their part. It's up to them to apologize for that. I'm apologizing for my part. And, that's it, I'm leaving it at that I should not have behaved that way. It does create a lovely intervention, because then it creates space for them to apologize to. Yeah. And it diffuses the whole situation.

Christina 51:44

When you're both like this, so it's funny, you mentioned that because historically speaking, my sister is five years older than me, she started a family very young. So I'm in my, you know, 40s, I'm single. So you know, regular family, we we had a

lot of very combative relationships with didn't have things in common, didn't know how to communicate.

Christina 52:05

So when I woke up, and she was the point of contact of who I'm leaving my whole life and everything in her hands. It was, it was not comfortable for me at first, right. And it continued to be really combative. And it wasn't until I got out of the hospital that I've been in when, you know, when I had the opportunity to travel as she was the first house first person I went to stay with that we sat down and talked with doubt, and I'm so grateful.

Christina 52:36

I'm so grateful for her, and one of my girlfriends who really just drop everything to be there along with everyone else in my life like that. I hate to say this, but I literally thought I was on a mountain by myself with work with life. And I just thought that was just where I was.

Christina 52:56

Go, the incredible support system that I had that was there this entire time. Right? Between my friends and family and work was just absolutely jaw dropping. Like it was just so amazing. But it's just the point of it is it's just so crazy, like and build up in our own brain. You know, it's just was none of the things I thought were reality were reality.

Bill 53:26

It's just bullshit stories that we make up to convince ourselves that we're right, what we're doing is okay, and everybody else is wrong. I went to counseling. So my first bleed was a 37. My awakening was a 37 after that first blade, and then after the second bleed, and after the third bleed it got, you know, I become more and more awake. And I started to just become aware of things that I had never been aware of that were always there.

Bill 53:51

But when I was, I reckon 31 or 32, I was at counseling. And I'm writing about this in my book at the moment. It's so it's fresh in my mind, that counselor said to me, she leaned forward, we had a really cool relationship. She was an amazing lady. She passed away about a year and a half ago.

Bill 54:09

And she moved forward and she said just before the session ended and she goes, is it possible that it's not them that it's you? I'm gonna swear for the first time on the podcast, I think I'm gonna use the F bomb. And I leaned forward like I would to a friend of mine who you know, says something to rouse me up. And I said, fuck off.

Christina 54:40

That's fine because that was the first thing I did. I actually did myself and I'm like, You did this to yourself. This is your fault. That's what I said to myself.

Bill 54:47

Yeah. And then I got up and I stormed out of there.

Christina 54:51

Sorry hold on a second. Good. My dog will start barking but I figured I might as well just put it in my lap.

Bill 55:03

So yeah, I've leaned forward, I've told her where to go. And then I got out of there I paid her, I got out of there. And then I was just shitty on the way home. And then for the next session, I had to contemplate this possibility that it was me this whole time. And by the time the next session came around, about a week or two later, I had really contemplated that and occurred to me that maybe it was me and how can I remedy this?

Bill 55:34

What are the parts that I'm doing? You know, what is it that I'm doing that is making them react that way to me, so am I playing a role in their behavior to me, and of course I am, because it's a big loop, all our behaviors in our all our relationships are a loop, they need me to act like that, so that they can act like that, and vice versa.

Bill 55:54

So that being able to apologize is the part that ruins the odd loop that destroys it, and then they don't know how to behave. So they also chill out and come to you at a nicer level at a different place and from their heart rather than from their head or from the gut, you know, reacting.

Bill 56:16

So that's been my experience. And, I'm grateful for the lesson. I really am. Because I don't know what would have happened if I didn't experience a stroke at 37. I don't know how I would be 47. I don't know if I'd be alive because I wasn't. I was just existing, I wasn't really being I wasn't being doing the human being part. I was just doing the existing part.

Energy Shift After The Intracranial Brain Hemorrhage



Christina 56:45

Right. And it is funny energetically. I believe in energy, right? I believe that you have an energy. And I mean, so my energy change, then the people around me felt energetically, there was a difference, because they like this, the relationships the way, we communicated the way we were together, it just all became much calmer. And, you know, and I didn't see that before.

Bill 57:15

I'll tell you why. I'll tell you why. Because you know, the thing that people knowingly relate to that we have an energy, that's true. So there's an organization in the states called heart math, and heart math, research the heart. And what they found is, there is an energy field around the heart that reaches out to meters, or for you guys, it's probably two yards or something, maybe it's six foot or something around the outside of your body.

Bill 57:42

And if you're in an angry state, the frequency that you vibrate at is a different

megahertz than the frequency that it vibrates at, if you're in a compassionate state, or a loving state. So it's not just this thing that we imagine energy, like it, in fact happens. So when you go to a party, and you can look over the other side of the room and say the life of the party is over there. There's a guy or a gal going nuts.

Bill 58:16

Yeah, they bring everybody into the room to a next level, the party goes off. And it's memorable for the right reasons. Right? when you, when you go into a party and a fight just happened, the energy level drops. And the reason being is because the vibration, the actual megahertz. And they can measure this right, the actual megahertz drops to a point. And that infects everybody else in the room, because of course, it doesn't make sense.

Bill 58:42

And then the party loses its vibe, and it loses amazingness and it becomes something memorable for the wrong reasons. So it's not it's not just that instinct, though, or a feeling that you have that you're saying, it's a legitimate thing. And we can change the vibration of the argument, the conversation simply by becoming mindful at that moment, dropping into your heart.

Bill 59:09

And the way to do it without actually giving it away that you're doing it and going into a meditation is you just put your hand on your heart. And you're shifting automatically, the way that you're expressing yourself and where that expression is coming from. You're activating your heart. And your heart usually wants to do loving and compassionate things but doesn't want to do crazy and angry and fighting things.

Christina 59:35

It's funny. For myself, I was like I said, I could elevate as a I could really quickly. I don't, I don't have the same reaction anymore. Like it literally, if I started to get worked up my age just naturally kind of calm down. Like I'm way more aware of it now and I just naturally calm down more faster.

Christina 59:57

Like I just don't get to that. You know that level anymore, which is great, you know, back to the interview stuff, you know, I believe in the interview stuff so

much that, you know, I, I created a team of people around me to get me to where I was, you know, I was in the hospital for the length of time that I was, I was able to accomplish, you know, walking out with a three prong cane, as well as an AFL.

Christina 1:00:23

And mind you, I had no feeling for my need and my foot still, but I still accomplished my goal, right? And then I just immediately I didn't even sit still, I basically went to every single specialist, they told me anything that ended with an O L, g, y, ology anyone, I had to go see. And then I immediately got enrolled in physical therapy, I found a Pilates instructor who had a physical therapy background. And I got a Reiki coach, ah, reiki, and a therapist.

Christina 1:00:54

And I was just like, that's it, we're doing this, like, and I just didn't stop and I'm, I still have all of these people in my system. I'm so they're still part of my network of me evolving. Because I'm not fully, you know, fully healed. Now, I still have a drop foot. So my right leg, I still experience experiencing drop foot. So I'm not able to run, you know, wear heels, which, for most people, that doesn't really matter.

Christina 1:01:20

I'm five, four on a no good day. So heels were like an identity, right for me. So and then you know, it, you know, not being just I don't live in a world of limitations. So having, like, still, my legs still working on developing, I'm still just constantly trying to figure out solutions.

Christina 1:01:46

Okay, okay, this isn't working. Let's try that. Let's try this. That's kind of what I've just continue to do just never stop. I haven't stopped or giving in to the fact that you know, there is no full recovery or nothing. That's just how it's gonna go for me, right. I don't know how long it's gonna take. But that I won't stop until I have full recovery.

Bill 1:02:10

It's a life time thing. And it's, it's a lifestyle as well, isn't it?

Christina 1:02:16

That was the most shocking was a lifestyle change for me.

Bill 1:02:21

Yeah. I love that. I love that you said Reiki, the most inexplicable unbelievably weird, strangest, craziest, difficult, crazy thing with such amazing results for me. And I don't know how to explain it or describe it. I've got no idea about it. And I knew nothing about it before stroke, and you would never have caught me dead in a Reiki practice or session before stroke. For some reason, man, it really does resonate. And I can only explain that it helps shift energy. That's anything I can explain it as.

Christina 1:03:04

I learned to not tell people I'm like, Hey, if you're open to it, just go do a session. Tell me when you walk in the door. If you feel one way, when you walk out the door, you feel different. That's all I need to know, that's really it. That's the difference. And, you know, as much as I appreciate going to therapy and everything, or having a therapist to talk to that, that I craved going to Reiki, you know what I mean?

Christina 1:03:29

I just automatically know I've got that energy shift is gonna come with it, you know, the meaning. And that was powerful for me to have that. And, really, really, really helpful for me. You know, it's one of the things I wanted to get back to the breathing part because I struggled. You know, I had to relearn how to talk really well, you know, again, coz my face was still a little droopy.

Christina 1:03:54

And again, that bothers the heck out of me. But the breathing was harder than I realized, to really learn how to be a diaphragm, like, breathe through my diaphragm versus my clavicle. So I did a ton of research and I ended up finding a breathing tool online. That single handedly. And this is why leading up to doing Pilates. Pilates helps breathing helped me to chill out and be able to be really good at breathing and I still wear it for when I get really stressful.

Christina 1:04:33

I don't want to butcher the name. It's called a Komuso. So it's the design is to mimic a like I think it's a Japanese flute. But really, it's not a flute at all. You use it to breathe into. So you do a series of breathing in through it. And then a series of breathing out through it. And you do it till you calm down.

Christina 1:05:00

And it worked. Like it worked. It's just crazy to even I know it sounds like not real. I recommend that to people that I knew that were having a hard time with stress during COVID. And literally, they trusted me, thank God, and it's worked for them. And I just thought, Wow, that is just, you know, it's just so amazing to be able to find things that can help you.

Importance Of Proper Breathing

Bill 1:05:28

And it's so amazing to be able to learn how to breathe. I mean, it sounds weird, but it's true, right? If you're not breathing properly, you're increasing potentially your heart rate, your cortisol, stress hormones, your blood, your blood pressure. And that is not oxygenating your body properly, and you're not oxygenating your brain properly, you're not oxygenating your organs properly.

Bill 1:05:55

So if you aren't doing that, then the body is not able to work optimally. And in stressful moments. It's not able to do its job and it's coping. Well, yeah, as best as it can, right. And it's not coping, the way that it would be if things were more chilled. If you're oxygenating your body properly, then you're getting lower blood pressure, lower heart rate, lower stress and cortisol hormones.

Bill 1:06:26

And that means you're able to sleep better at night, which means it's going to start that beautiful cycle, again, of being better. And this is the whole thing people don't realize that stroke recovery, there's an aspect of it, that's expensive, that costs money, physical therapy, there's a lot of it you can do at home, it doesn't cost you anything, you just got to learn how to breathe again.

Bill 1:06:45

And if you think you know how to breathe, you probably are doing it wrong. If you haven't actually spent time learning about it, you're most likely doing it wrong, because most of us are. That's what happens in these high paced, crazy Western cities where it's just go go go, you know, forever, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is what happens and you don't realize it but you get sucked into your breathing patterns, change shift that, everything changes.

Christina 1:07:17

Looking back, I mean, I grew up in a very obnoxious, very loud family. So I'm a loud person as it is. And you know, if I'm in a loud environment, I would just automatically try to talk over the other loud environment, not even thinking. So I would strain my vocal cords so much that I would lose my voice. Often, I would have a migraine, and I lose my voice. Not so much since I you know, we learn all that. Luckily, it's been so much better. But you don't even think about what you're doing to yourself.

Bill 1:07:48

You're, my sister from another mister man, you just described me. That's exactly what I used to do. I used to get to that point where I would scream so much that words would stop coming out. And I was still doing the screaming face. But there was nothing coming out.

Christina 1:08:07

Oh, same. Absolutely same. Like, even when I lose, I'm still trying to talk like it's just so crazy. There's a you know, because I deal with business and has concentrated. I used to always joke with people that my inflection my voice just never changes is whether I'm really mad, and I'm yelling at you and I'm cursing or whether I'm just saying hello.

Christina 1:08:28

More than often it's probably going to sound exactly the same. Right? So and you know, that was just one of the things I thought was funny. But now I'm like, you know, I have PTSD from screaming like I don't I do whatever I can and not going to migrate. When you have a migraine for three weeks straight. You know, you do not want migraine, that is for sure.

Bill 1:08:49

I noticed that now. So amongst everything that we've said, all the things that I've learned, like, I'm still not perfect, I still stuff. I still have arguments for my wife, I still do all the stupid shit that I used to do. But I don't do it as much as I used to. In fact, I don't very little, but I still find myself there sometimes.

Bill 1:09:10

So most recently, I've had an argument with my wife. And usually it's always about dumb stuff. I find I get to that point where I notice immediately what it does

to my body, my head. And I can't actually after arguing with her. I can't actually be upright. I've got to go lay down it has such a massive impact.

Christina 1:09:33

Now we have a physical impact that we've never noticed before.

Bill 1:09:38

Yeah. And that's what I'm kind of grateful for that because every time I go through that and I have to lie down and I can't bloody move. I'm like this is not good. This is another reason why I should stop doing this. Plus, I'm being an idiot to my wife but I also need to stop doing this because it's no good to me.

Christina 1:10:02

I'm not perfect, but I, I've often joked, and you know, I'm being serious that the reason why I am not fully healed, and I still have this reminder, is because maybe I haven't fully learned my lesson. You know what I mean? Maybe my body's like, nope, you're not ready, you feel need to work on yourself, you know, do this, do that do this, before we allow you to be, you know, out and about doing whatever you want.

Christina 1:10:30

Because, you know, the one thing that I can admit that I struggle with, with not having the physical part being fully recovered is, you know, I was a very independent person. I would travel by myself, I, you know, I didn't, I have really good, I was raised to have really good awareness, street awareness, street knowledge you had I mean, so have common sense.

Christina 1:10:53

And in environments where I felt like I could protect myself, well, that gets challenged when you have a leg that's not working and you can't run. Like, I can't run away. Someone would for sure, catch me, let's just say that I didn't know what. So there is a sense of independence, I've got really good still gets really, really, really challenged, that I, on a daily basis, have to work her.

Christina 1:11:22

But you know, I literally got a lot of tattoos, these little ones to memorialize my experience, one of them being it says surrender. Because that was the first thing I said to myself. When I was on the floor, when I got back in bed, I was like you just need to fucking surrender, just stop doing this.

Christina 1:11:45

And I often have to remember that to myself, like, you know what, you just got to continue going down, again, day by day. Because like, you know, I did everything in my power to get back to work, which is really interesting that my situation was a little different where, you know, in United States, we have this thing called FMLA, which is a federal back program for when someone has like a major catastrophe.

Christina 1:12:11

Well, when that was up, that would have meant that my company was going to have to start paying for whatever happens. So I wanted to make sure I got back to work, you know, in time to where I was in a good place. I made sure I do whatever I had to get the write off for my my neurologist. But, you know, my accident happened in April, I was back technically, technically, in August of that year.

Christina 1:12:36

Mind you, I'm working remote. And thankfully, I can say this now, my work was still not convinced that they could trust me, even though it's back to work. They did it to pacify me I think. They weren't giving me work to do. So that was an interesting thing that I had to eventually look out from a different perspective and respect what they're doing, like anyone involved with what I had to go through which everybody was involved, but the whole process, they did not want me to get back to that place again.

Christina 1:13:11

So they protected me more than I realized and just slow played. They forcefully slow played giving me work to do. Right. And I remember just being like, why aren't you guys not giving me work? Like what is going on here? You don't I mean, it's just so funny. And now I can look back and go, you know what, they're just smarter than I am.

Recovery and Personal Growth



Bill 1:13:33

Yeah, they could see what you can't and that they were looking out for you they had you're back. So that's pretty cool. And it's early, you know, I mean, four months back at work, that's, look, it's too early. But I get it, but I get it. And even now you're only 16 months out. And like it's it's early days, and you're doing, you've done a lot you've overcome so much you've become aware of so many things, you know, your mindset changed completely, you've dropped into your heart, you're connected with your heart.

Bill 1:14:07

You know, you've used your instincts wisely, to guide you through some of the most crucial times, you know, you meditated. You focused on learning how to use your parts of the body that were gone again, you know, you surrounded yourself with an amazing community from every aspect everywhere, you know, and it sounds like you're well on the way of shifting from being somebody who's just living like this A personality, corporate life to somebody who's going to live a more vast more beautiful life rather than just a work related one. And imagine what life will be like five years from now.

Christina 1:14:54

Yeah, it's such an aha moment when you're like, oh, huh. I you know, I literally doesn't, I don't have the same connection anymore to work. And it's such a great feeling like, I now have that opportunity to bring in relationships and be present. And really, you know, I never liked staying home before. Now. It's like my temple. I love being home. You know, I mean, so it's just, it's just little things like that where you don't you just don't I did not I had no clue how I was showing up and

what I was doing.

Bill 1:15:30

I was gonna say we tend to be narrow minded, because I don't know why. I mean, everyone has their own reason why, but for me, imagine me dying at 37 because of this bleed, right? It has nearly that was nearly 10 years ago. Imagine me dying at 37, what would they say about me? I used to work a lot. Congratulations. Ah, he was an asshole to his kids. He yelled and screamed at his wife. What the hell would they say? Oh, yeah, we had a few beers with him. We used to love getting drunk with him or stoned or whatever. And it's like, really?

Christina 1:16:13

Where's the depth? Where's the memories? Where's the you know, the? Yeah, I agree. Like, you know, I couldn't even I like I said, I'm just very grateful that I had the opportunity. What's so great about your podcast, though, is like there, you know, I am 42 years old, I consider myself young, I have a great group of friends.

Christina 1:16:38

And I don't know, anyone in my circle, who's had a stroke, at my age or around my age or younger. So again, there was still that isolation part. Right. And your podcast gave me the validation that I needed to go, you know what, I'm actually doing really, really good for my circumstances, and, you know, and then I also have a place that I think I included the link for the website where this place made me realize the extreme opposite of what can happen to you when you're in stroke when the stroke happens.

Christina 1:17:19

Which you got a couple podcasts reading for people who have I had a seizure, a really serious side effects that you're like, Okay, this is the reality. It doesn't anyone of us who has a stroke could have been one of those people. You know, the latest place that I actually pay out of pocket to though, is a nonprofit called driven, Lv, Ella's in Las Vegas.

Christina 1:17:42

And they deal with a lot of people who had head trauma, spine trauma, and then stroke victims or stroke survivors, majority of the people that go to this place, are all now quadriplegics. So that includes stroke survivors, who are normal, who then became quadriplegic like that right there alone was like, aha.

Bill 1:18:12

It's random, this thing is random. And we got the randomness that meant we can talk on a podcast and still be here, that's what I got out of stroke is like completely random. And I got the lucky version of it. And it's like, Okay, so I've got a responsibility. Now, what's my responsibility? Part of it is to talk about the topics on behalf of stroke survivors.

Bill 1:18:36

They can't be on my podcast, the ones that can great you guys talk for yourselves, but the ones that can't we talk on their behalf as well. They get to hear hopefully, and they get to feel like they're part of a community. And if they reach out, I'll get them on the podcast. If they can talk or they can't talk. We'll use a machine. I don't care.

Christina 1:18:56

I love that episode, by the way, where you had the guy in the machine, I was just like, Oh my God, that's amazing.

Bill 1:19:02

He's a legend. I mean, on Instagram.

Christina 1:19:05

He was funny.

Bill 1:19:06

He's hilarious. The guy on Instagram is an absolute Nutter. I mean, he's an amazing bloke. I would love to have a beer with him. In person. I mean I reckon, him and I can be great friends because he's got a sick sense of humor. Recently he fell off his wheelchair, his electric wheelchair, he smashed his head on the ground.

Bill 1:19:25

And he's posting photos on Instagram of the bleed, and how it repaired and healed over five or seven days. And then when he fell on the ground, he said he was laughing his head off. And it was the laughing that made him fall out of the chair. Something funny happened. I don't know what. He's just hilarious. So to not give a person like that or any person, opportunity to express themselves, I think is a real tragedy.

Bill 1:19:51

If somebody is isolated, and they want to express themselves, they need to come on my podcast. We'll work it out somehow, you know, and that's what I love it when you reached out, you know, that's why I love it. Because it's like somebody wants to share and get this thing off their chest, I do it every single episode, it's 160 episodes nearly coming up. And I get to do it every single episode. And that's why I started it. I can't imagine telling my wife every single day, what the stroke has done to me and how it impacts me. She's not gonna want to hear it. And fair enough.

Christina 1:20:30

They don't really get it like I love my friends and family, and I appreciate sometimes where they want to tell you what you want to hear. But they don't you know, sometimes really want to hear what you're saying. Like, I know, like, it's funny. I heard this on one of your one of your other episodes where it's like, I don't want to be treated different. But I am different.

Bill 1:20:58

Different than what you were, you're different than what you were. So you have different needs and different requirements. So on the same person, we are friends exactly like we were, but I'm a little bit different. So I can't go on a busy night out with you. And don't take it personally when I say no.

Christina 1:21:17

I remember the first time which you brought this up. I remember wanting I had hit a milestone on something where I think I had no longer needed to go to any of the doctors. Although the medication part made me really mad when they were like, okay, you're not taking any more of these meds like the keppra. that bothered me so much.

Christina 1:21:39

Because that was something my mom who passed away from brain cancer, she had a big keppra that really triggered me but you know, when I got told by my cardiologist that he's like, Okay, great, you're doing fantastic, but you're going to stay on this medication, which is Atenolol for your blood pressure. And your heart rate it's 12.5 milligrams a day for the just in case.

Christina 1:22:03

I was like, No, I don't want no I didn't have to take this medicine before. I'm fine. Now I checked my blood pressure. I don't want to take this medicine. So it's just those little things that you don't even think about that was really interesting to me. But you know, the first time I had a drink, they warn you about some of these things that you have to read the first time you do anything involving your heart, or stuff like that, they're like, make sure you have people with you make sure you're sitting down.

Christina 1:22:34

So it's gonna feel like it's six strings. And one that was really interesting to me, like how it affected your equilibrium. You know, I mean, I'm fine now. But obviously, I don't drink I kept out of the vendors, I'm doing that, right. But it definitely did change my lifestyle in that way, especially with the fact that I have a leg that's not fully recovered.

Bill 1:22:58

Yeah, the last thing you want to do is be half-drunk, go for a walk, and then you trip over because you're half drunk and your leg is different from what it was. So that's really simple for me as well. My leg is different. It's not visibly different. This is the difference, so people can't see it, right. So when I have one drink, I feel like my left side is already drunk. And that means my balance is off. And that means I can't feel my leg properly. And that means I could fall over and hurt myself.

Bill 1:23:31

I don't wanna end up with a smashed head open or anything like that again. So if I am going to drink I'm going to drink at home with people around me. Where, I'm just going to have a little bit just because everybody else is and then I can just, you know, feel like I'm part of the group or whatever, you know. And it's good to have a drink every once in a while I enjoy a gin and tonic or something along those lines every so often.

Bill 1:23:57

But for the first three or four years, I didn't drink anything. So the first drink was a really strange one. That was far out. That was such an experience cheap date. I'll tell you what if I was dating then and somebody came in, took me out for a drink. That was it. And they bought me a drink we're done one drink. Let's go home, I'm actually drunk.

Christina 1:24:21

I was so protective of myself that I didn't want to put myself in certain environments, because I just, I didn't want to be that vulnerable or that way in public. You know, I mean, like, I had my first drink I had with a girlfriend at her sister's house and I ended up staying the night but I was like, Whoa, this feels crazy. Tastes the same was fantastic, but it didn't. You know, it just kind of it just teaches you to slow down like for me when I go out to like, let's say I do have a couple of drinks.

Christina 1:24:50

I know at some point, I'm gonna need need to grab someone's arm. Or like just different like there's just so many things you just never have to think about beforehand. Like When I approach a curb, it's like, I have to stop and adjust myself to then step up on the curb. It's just so thoughtful how everything you do all day long. It's just such as presence that you have to think about that no one else has to see you do or worry about in their entire life. It's so bizarre to me.

Dealing With Deficits

Bill 1:25:22

Tell me as we wrap up, because we've been talking for ages, and we could probably talk for even longer. As we wrap up, how do you deal with because this is something that's come up with one of my coaching clients recently. So you know, like you and I he's had a stroke. And the main thing that he's left with it, still it pretty early on for him as well is the fatigue, and you know, the wooziness, and the brain kind of sort of still resetting.

Bill 1:25:49

But he's got numbness in his foot, just in his foot. Like he said, it's about this big in one part of his foot. But he focuses on it all the time. And it's really stressing him out. Do you pay attention to the before and after? And is that challenging to you? Or do you just, this is how it is? Let's make the most of it. Like, how do you work through this very real difference between your leg the way that it was and the way that it is now with foot drop?

Christina 1:26:20

I'm not going to sugarcoat it. It's a constant like this, right? So I know that there are things that so one of the things that I end up getting them in and getting one

of the machines to do the shocking, to my leg. Electrical stimulation. So I've been continuing, you know, there's times where I won't do it, there's times where I, you know, I'll start back up and doing it.

Christina 1:26:42

So it's just continuing to do that, utilize the tools that you have to do the things you need to do to help your legs right? Or if something's not working. And sometimes I have to tell myself, okay, in this very moment, there's probably a reason it's not working, go lay down, chill out, meditate, well listen to some positive affirmations and just now I understand when you start working against yourself, but I guess for me, like if I had to tell someone else, outside of like, sometimes these things are just meant to be there to happen. And you just got to calm down and reset right? So is he having numbness in his toe?

Bill 1:27:26

There is numbness in one part of his foot is focusing on it. And he's bothered by the comparison, the other leg is not like that. This one is like that. I keep noticing it. I wish it would stop being like that. I want it to go away. And it may not.

Christina 1:27:42

It is not positive. I know what the what the repercussions are. When I talk negative to myself, like I allow it to happen. But then I try to reset and talk to yourself. So I have the same problem. My right toe. So I can push my feet up. I can't grip these big toe and the one next to it will not grip. This one won't even really move. So I could beat myself up all day. But guess what's gonna do the exact opposite of what I wanted to do.

Bill 1:28:19

Yeah, I was gonna say I never thought of it. I just don't do that. And I've never done it. So it's real hard for me to explain how I got to the point where I just don't do it. And I'm like, this is what it is, this is what it is. I'll just overcome it. And I won't give it enough. I won't give it all my energy. So what I'll do is I'll put my energy into other things. Like the neuroplasticity, we'll work around that even though that's there we'll work.

Christina 1:28:49

That whole thing when when I first learned about I was like, Wow, it kicks you out. And I mean, like, I remember learning about how the difference between a

break and what we're going through and how you had to get your brain to reconnect the entire thing. And how absolutely crazy is to try to explain that to someone.

Christina 1:29:08

You know, I won't sugarcoat that I have still to this day, I still struggle with that part of my foot. But I also try to be conscious of going you know it, keep going your peepee keep going your Pilates, do your stretching, which most of us don't do, there are exercises we can do at home to try to get it to wake up. It's just I know for myself, when it doesn't work I don't want to do it.

It Can Happen To Anyone



Christina 1:29:31

But doesn't mean that I shouldn't keep doing it. The one thing I wanted to also point out that we didn't discuss in my hemorrhage was random. There is nothing connected to it. They never were able to identify why it happened. I wanted to make sure that whoever is listening to this, if it can happen to me. It could happen to anyone and there's no genetic there wasn't anything. It just As a random intracranial brain hemorrhage. So I want to emphasize that it can happen to anyone.

Bill 1:30:08

And you feel that that randomness was something contributed to you by your lifestyle and the kind of way that you went about life?

Christina 1:30:18

Like I said, I was a ticking time bomb. Without me realizing that, like, I wasn't shifting, and I think I was continuing a lifestyle that was not able to continue in that manner. And this needed to happen for me to reset, reevaluate, you know, repurpose, and, you know, continue just developing and being an amazing person.

Christina 1:30:44

And, you know, having a more, a better, more impactful and enjoyable life. That I didn't realize I wasn't doing so yeah, I absolutely take ownership and whatever led me to that point. And I'm very, I've said this since day one, granted, there are parts that I don't like, but I don't take it for granted. And I actually appreciate the person I've developed and continue to develop became as an outcome of it.

Bill 1:31:14

On that note. I'm going to wrap it up. And I want to thank you so much for reaching out. And being on the podcast, sharing your story and making it about other people. And giving yourself an opportunity to also get this stuff off your chest, and give yourself a conversation with somebody that gets you.

Bill 1:31:40

And hopefully, what we'll do is, we'll organize some links to your socials and all that kind of stuff where other stroke survivors who have listened to this can reach out to you. And you guys can begin getting to know each other as well.

Christina 1:31:54

Yeah, that's exciting. It definitely. I mean, like I said, your podcast has opened me to a network of people that have been in my situation. And it just feels really good to realize that you're not by yourself. So I thank you very much for creating it. It's been really impactful and continues to be very impactful for me and helpful for me, that I have an outlet of where I can feel like I'm a part of something even though it's a crazy community.

Christina 1:32:22

But I'm not alone. So thank you very much. I really appreciate that. And, you know, you're all the way in Australia, so right Australia, and you've done this and think about it, I've heard your podcast, and you're, you know, doesn't matter where they are in the world. And we're all connected now through your podcast. So I really, really value that. And I really appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Bill 1:32:44

Thanks so much for joining me on today's recovery after stroke podcast. Do you ever wish there was just one place to go for resources, advice and support in your stroke recovery? Whether you've been navigating your journey for weeks, months or years, I know firsthand how difficult it can be to get the answers you need.

Bill 1:33:03

This road is both physically and mentally challenging from reclaiming your independence, to getting back to work to rebuilding your confidence and more. Your symptoms don't follow a rulebook and soon as you leave the hospital, you no longer have medical professionals on tap.

Bill 1:33:19

I know for me It felt as if I was teaching myself a new language from scratch with no native speaker in sight. If this sounds like you, I'm here to tell you that you're not alone and there is a better way to navigate your recovery and build a fulfilling life that you love. I've created an inclusive, supportive and accessible membership community called recovery after stroke.

Bill 1:33:41

This all in one support and resource program is designed to help you take your health into your own hands. This is your guidebook through every step of your journey from reducing fatigue, to strengthening your brain to overcoming anxiety and more. To find out more and to join the community just head to recoveryafterstroke.com See you next time.

Intro 1:34:04

Importantly, we present many podcasts designed to give you an insight and understanding into the experiences of other individuals opinions and treatment protocols disgusting any podcast or the individual's own experience and we do not necessarily share the same opinion nor do we recommend any treatment protocol discussed.

Intro 1:34:21

All content on this website at any length blog, podcast or video material controlled this website or content is created and produced for informational purposes only and is largely based on the personal experience of Bill Gasiamis the content is intended to complement your medical treatment and support healing.

Intro 1:34:38

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Intro 1:34:59

Never delay see advice or disregard the advice of a medical professional, your 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 in Australia or your local emergency number immediately for emergency assistance or go to the nearest hospital emergency department.

Intro 1:35:23

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