# Jonathan & Letitia Hritz: Keeping a Promise Through Stroke, Seizures, and Everything After

# Seizures After Stroke Symptoms: What Letitia Hritz Wants Every Survivor to Know

It was New Year's Day, and Letitia Hritz almost didn't go. Her husband Jonathan wanted to hit a sale at their local mall, and she'd rather have stayed home. She went anyway, with gift certificates from Christmas, a Chinese buffet for lunch, their seven-year-old daughter in tow. They'd barely sat down at the restaurant when it started: tunnel vision, a sudden inability to speak, the desperate, wordless search for the nearest chair. "I remember sitting there," Letitia says, "and I think I said I feel like I'm going to pass out. And that honestly was the last thing I remember."

She was 34. The emergency room staff, seeing a young woman collapse on New Year's Day, assumed the obvious: too much celebrating the night before. It took nearly three hours, and a doctor asking her to roll over and noticing her face had dropped, before anyone called a stroke alert. By then Jonathan had already caught her as she went limp in his arms, already flagged down an off-duty paramedic eating lunch nearby, already made the drive to the ER with their daughter beside him, not yet knowing the word for what was happening to his wife.

## The Diagnosis No One Expected

Letitia's stroke was ischemic, centered in the left thalamus a similar injury to other survivors Bill has spoken with (recoveryafterstroke.com/thalamic-ischemic-stroke-survivor-story/), and one that comes with its own particular set of

challenges around sensation, fatigue, and cognition. The cause, once doctors went looking, turned out to be a PFO, a small hole in her heart that had let a clot travel straight to her brain. It's a cause other guests on this show have lived through too (recoveryafterstroke.com/pfo-and-stroke-recovery-yvette-adams/), and like many of them, Letitia had no idea it was there until the stroke forced the question.

What followed was the version of recovery most people never hear about: inpatient rehab, then six months of outpatient therapy, a wheelchair, then a walker, then a cane she still carries today. And then, just as she seemed to be finding her footing, something stranger: a full return of her stroke symptoms, triggered by an unrelated illness, so sudden and so complete that even a family who'd spent two decades around the "stroke world" had never heard the word for it: recrudescence. "I'm glad you've never heard of that," Jonathan told Bill, "because I know you've been doing this a long time… and we had never heard of it either."

## Seizures After Stroke Symptoms: What Letitia Actually Experiences

This year, a new chapter began, one this episode was built around. Letitia started having seizures. Not occasionally: close to 200 of them since January, sometimes several in a single day. What makes seizures after stroke symptoms so hard to manage isn't just the seizures themselves, but how unpredictable the warning signs can be. "I try very hard to pay attention to how I'm feeling," Letitia says, "but there are some days where I don't feel well, and it's very hard to differentiate those two feelings." Some seizures come with a warning she's learned to read. Others don't; they simply arrive, and the world goes dark for a minute or three.

The seizures have taken her driving privileges and, with them, a piece of her independence. They've also reshaped her household in a quietly heartbreaking way: her ten-year-old daughter now knows to guide her mother to the floor, pull out an iPad, and start a timer. "I hate it," Letitia says. "I just hate it." It's a small, devastating image of what recovery actually asks of a family: not a single crisis to survive, but a new baseline everyone has to learn to live inside.

## A House That Was Never Built for This

Long before the seizures, the Hritz family was already learning how much a body's needs can outpace a home's design. Their two-story house has eight steps from the driveway to the front door, fifteen more to the bedroom, ten down to the laundry. "I'm sitting there at thirty-four years old," Jonathan remembers, "thinking to myself, how am I ever going to take my wife home?" It's a question few young stroke survivors (recoveryafterstroke.com/young-stroke-survivor-izzy-hirst/) or their partners expect to face, and one more reason recovery is rarely just medical.

## The Cost That Never Stops Climbing

Then there's the bill. This year alone, between two hospital admissions, the Hritz family is looking at roughly $178,000 in medical costs a number that grows faster than they can pay it down. "You can make all the payments you want," Jonathan says, "it never goes down." It's the kind of financial strain that stroke caregivers (recoveryafterstroke.com/stroke-caregivers/) rarely get warned about in advance, and one more layer on top of everything else the family is carrying, including, this year, college funds quietly set aside for something else.

## A Promise Still Being Kept

Through all of it, one thing has stayed constant. Bedside in the hospital in 2023, Jonathan made Letitia a promise: that no matter what happened, they would get through it together, and he would always give her a safe place to heal. Three years, a heart procedure, a recrudescence episode, and nearly 200 seizures later, that promise is the reason their family calls their story Keeping a Promise, and it's still, in Jonathan's words, "something I'm still trying to keep, because we have not been able to."

Their story is a reminder of something Bill has said often on this show, in different words each time: recovery isn't a straight line, and it doesn't end when the hospital discharges you. As Jonathan puts it, "People just think, he was in the hospital, and he's out now. He must be okay… They're not okay." What the Hritz family is living through — the seizures, the setbacks, the debt, the promise is exactly the kind of story that doesn't get told enough. If any part of it sounds

familiar, you are not the only one going through it (recoveryafterstroke.com/stroke-caregiver-journey-donna-odonnell-figurski/), and it's worth hearing more stories like it, wherever you can find them.

Bill's book, The Unexpected Way That A Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened, was written for exactly this: the years after the hospital, when the real work of recovery begins. Read it here: recoveryafterstroke.com/book. And if this show has helped you the way it's helped families like the Hritzes, you can support it directly on Patreon: patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke.

**This blog is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Please consult your doctor before making any changes to your health or recovery plan.**