

Life After Brain Hemorrhage - Rodrigo Sanmar

Rodrigo Sanmar was living an unsustainable life as a film creator in Mexico when too much work and not enough downtime led to a brain hemorrhage that change his life for the better.

Facebook

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Transcription:

Rodrigo Sanmar 0:00

There is this amazing, I love it, this North American saying that people in the US they say this phrase that I love is, "The angrier I am, the more a**holes I meet. I mean, if you concentrate in this bad mood and of course, bad things will happen to you all day long. I mean, what you were just saying, I you can't achieve something because it's too big, you only have to get a team and the resources you have to put together to create it.

Rodrigo Sanmar 0:33

But the important thing is, will you allow yourself to take the first step on the direction that you want to go? Because that's where everything starts, or you keep in the fear that you won't be able to achieve it, because everything will go wrong and you don't start anything, never.

Intro 0:57

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

Bill Gasiamis 1:10

Hello, and welcome to episode 207 of the recovery after stroke podcast. If you are a stroke survivor with a story to share about your experience with stroke, and you have been thinking about reaching out to be a guest on the show. But we're waiting for the right time to reach out? This is it guys.

Bill Gasiamis 1:27

If you go to recoveryafterstroke.com/contact, you'll find the form that you can fill out to apply to be a guest on the show. There isn't much to do with regards to the application. Basically you have to be a stroke survivor, or care for somebody who's a stroke survivor, or be somebody that helps other stroke survivors.

Introduction - Rodrigo Sanmar



Bill Gasiamis 1:47

So not much to do to qualify. As soon as I received the request, I will respond with more details on how you can choose a time that works for you. So that we can meet over zoom at a time that's convenient for both of us. My guest today is Rodrigo Sanmar, a film creator and hemorrhagic stroke survivor at the age of 28.

Bill Gasiamis 1:47

Rodrigo is my first guest living in Mexico. And I'm so excited that the podcast has been able to reach so many different countries around the world. And so far we have been listened to in 68 countries. It is absolutely amazing. Thanks, everyone

for tuning in. It is so amazing. And I really appreciate it and I just can't believe it. Anyhow, now it's on with the show. Rodrigo Sanmar welcome to the podcast.

Rodrigo Sanmar 2:42

Thank you, thank you for having me. It's a pleasure.

Bill Gasiamis 2:47

Man, thank you for being on the podcast all the way Mexico, it's the first time I've had somebody from Mexico on my podcast.

Rodrigo Sanmar 2:55

How nice.

Bill Gasiamis 2:56

It is, it's very nice, actually, because that's amazing how the podcast goes all around the world. And all the people that I interview are stroke survivors, or helping a stroke survivor in some way, shape, or form. And that's the unfortunate thing is stroke does not discriminate. It goes to every part of the world, every kind of person, every nationality doesn't matter. And unfortunately, there's too many of us, but at least it has brought us together. Tell me a little bit about what has happened to you.

Rodrigo Sanmar Had A Hemorrhagic Stroke



Rodrigo Sanmar 3:33

Thank you, I suffered from brain hemorrhage when I was 28 years old. I was living in how can I say this, like I was on a rat wheel running faster than I could

but not knowing where I was going. And I can say this now to you I was completely lost. Even though at that time, I wasn't aware of that.

Rodrigo Sanmar 4:07

Not myself, but not everyone around me, my friends, my family, everybody was like, completely shocked when they realized what I was going through because it exploded as a hemorrhage because I was you know, working really hard, making a lot of noise around my life not listening to the real thing inside me and not taking the time to stop and realizing where I wanted to go or what I was doing.

Rodrigo Sanmar 4:40

I'm a filmmaker and I was creating a film at that moment about freedom of speech in Mexico about violence against journalists, and activists. I was traveling all around the country and at the same time, I was running an advertising company. And I was also trying to lift an association to help people who was living in the area of a dumpster.

Rodrigo Sanmar 5:14

So, you know, I was trying to fix the world, everything at the same moment. And plus, I was not having good how to say this food habits, I mean, I was eating really bad, sleeping really bad, or sometimes not even sleeping, you know, the amount of sleep, minimum. And everything was more important than myself, my girlfriend, my friends, my job, my community, everything was first. And I was the last in my list.

Bill Gasiamis 5:54

Sounds very common from stroke survivors to say something similar to you, at 28 years old. Not many 28-year-olds are interested in so many serious topics, and they're not really going after making a big difference in the world, how did you get to the point to be so concerned and so interested about topics like freedom of speech?

Rodrigo Sanmar 6:21

I think I have always been like that. I, at that moment, as I was mentioning, I was trying to fix everything around me. I mean, we produced that same year. I mean it was 2012. And that year, I was, you know, with this association with the advertising company, and I was also making the design for the G20. Who happen in Mexico that year, and, you know, I was trying to eat the whole world in one

bite.

Rodrigo Sanmar 6:58

And, in my film company, one of my closest friends, was working for article 19, which is an international association NGO, for freedom of speech. And they realized that in Mexico, there was a huge growing problem in freedom of speech, not only from the crime people, but also from the government, which was even worse, you know, for the journalist.

Rodrigo Sanmar 7:29

And I was like, yeah, we have to show the study, we have to give voice to journalists that have no voice or that they're gone, or their families or, crying and, worried. So I was inspired by that, but I went like deep bound in the problem, and I was like, very close contact with violence and with people in the government doing really bad things.

Rodrigo Sanmar 7:55

So suddenly, it wasn't only like, a huge amount of work, but also being, you know, a little worry about my team, and, you know, and the people who were working on the documentary, and as I was mentioning, plus not taking really care for myself, I mean, not eating well, not sleeping well, going out and going to party after all the work during the day, instead of going to bed, and drinking alcohol, to calm all that noise that came from the outside.

Rodrigo Sanmar 8:33

So that delivered me to my brain not being able to handle the whole situation. And suddenly I woke up in a hospital bed, after 16 days in coma and not knowing what happened at all. And I was completely paralyzed from my left side of my body. And the doctor explained to me like, Okay, you were about to die and I need you to be really come down, you're safe now.

Rodrigo Sanmar 9:06

But I need your brain to come down to not be in are in a rush right now. Because it healing and peace now. But it's funny, because before the stroke, I that if I missed a day in the office, the world would fall apart, right? That if I wasn't there, everything else wouldn't work and then suddenly. I realized that it wasn't that way. I mean, I was two full weeks in the hospital in a coma, and the world kept going around, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 9:47

I had a similar experience. I thought that I was the only one that could do the work that I was doing properly, or as good as me, nobody else could do it. I couldn't replace myself because my customers always wanted to see me. And I couldn't find people, it was too hard.

Bill Gasiamis 10:09

There was so many not true stories that I was telling myself about why I couldn't replace myself before the stroke and why I couldn't do the work to find the right person to give me some time off and some rest. So I'm not working six and seven days a week.

Bill Gasiamis 10:28

So I'm not working 16 hours a day. And then I was in hospital. And I wasn't allowed to go back to work for a minimum of at the beginning, it was a minimum of six weeks, but then all the brain hemorrhages that I had happened over three years, so for three years, I was in and out of work all the time.

Bill Gasiamis 10:53

And my, I found people to do the work, my turnover increased, we were busier than ever, and I was hardly ever at work. I was doing it from home. And it's the one thing that made me realize the stories I was telling myself was all just not true, just bullshit that I was making up. And I think I thought I was more important than I actually was at work.

Bill Gasiamis 11:24

But I was 37 years old. And I had started my business when I was, say 26, or 27. You know, so I did put a lot of hard work into getting there. And, becoming somewhat successful. And then being able to support my family was starting to happen, all these things were happening. But I was pretty like you, tired, angry, didn't sleep enough, didn't eat well, worked too much, never did things that I enjoyed, that I loved always had problems at work.

Bill Gasiamis 11:59

So fixing them was always a hassle. It was such an all-consuming situation. And it just changed overnight when I had a brain hemorrhage as well, mine was from an AVM that I was born with that burst. And then while I was in hospital, everyone who I thought wasn't capable of stepping up to help out, stepped up and they did

an amazing job.

Bill Gasiamis 12:27

And all I had to do was give them the opportunity. But I never knew that that's what I had to do. The opportunity was created when I was in hospital, and I couldn't go to work. And we had work to do. And my clients still wanted us to do it. Even if I wasn't there. They still wanted to work then. So it's interesting. How big was the team that you were leading?

Rodrigo Sanmar 12:49

It wasn't that big. Because we as a film company, we you know, we grew with the project, and we got small with no project. So we weren't that big. But we were I mean, we were a little bigger than usual because we were making this documentary thing, which was like a big thing. And we big budget, big interest, and it's amazing.

Rodrigo Sanmar 13:17

I mean, just listening to you right now, it's almost unbelievable that we can't realize this without having this stroke. I mean, this hit, I mean, it's always there. But we live in an illusion that we are, the only one who can do the job or nobody else can do it the way I do it, or the world would fall apart. If I don't step in the office one day, I mean, one day, it's almost, I mean, now I can see it, but in the moment, it's your legs talking, you know, in the world, and you can't have perspective.

Thanks To The Stroke

Rodrigo Sanmar 13:55

And I suppose you went through a similar thing, but I'm so thankful that I went through that experience because it completely opened my perspective. And it gave me this connection with myself to be able to know that I'm even bigger if I'm not working that hard. I mean, I can create even more things if I open myself, and I give the job to other people and I allow people to do things, and I trust people to create things. And I only direct them or you know, or supervise them. But it's a laugh, but it's really sad that you can realize that in that moment.

Bill Gasiamis 14:39

I agree. 100%. And what I learned was that is you actually have to get good at

replacing yourself. You have to start moving away from the business and working on the business, not in the business. And the more you work in the business, the more it can grow and you can bring people and give them the opportunity to step up.

Bill Gasiamis 15:00

And to take more responsibility to earn more money to work more. And then you can free yourself to do the things that you need to do. For me, what I really needed to do was get clients, my job was then how to get more clients to do more work, so I can employ more people, so that we can grow the business and it can offer better services or more services, charge more money, whatever the situation was.

Bill Gasiamis 15:26

But when I was in the business, and, and doing all the work, every aspect, quoting, working, picking up materials, meeting clients doing everything, when I was doing all of that I was missing opportunities that were there. Because I didn't actually have the resources to help out in other areas, when people contacted me and said, We need you to come and potentially do this work for us.

Bill Gasiamis 15:55

So I was always missing out on opportunities, thinking that I was stuck inside the business simply because I was too afraid to allow other people to take responsibility and step up and do some of the jobs that I was going to do. And what was interesting. After the stroke, I became really into personal development.

Bill Gasiamis 16:17

And I had more time than ever to go to courses, to go and meet new people to get coaching to get counseling to get all these things that I didn't know were possible before. All of a sudden I was unwell, recovering from three brain hemorrhages, recovering from brain surgery, but I had time to run a business. I had time to get personal development training, time to see my counselor, I had time to do all these things. Before I had none, it was ridiculous.

Rodrigo Sanmar 16:55

It's unbelievable. How mindset can change your whole world. And that's one of the blessings we have with these strokes we experienced. Because it gives you in my case, I suppose you've shared some things as well. But it's a completely

different perspective.

Rodrigo Sanmar 17:22

I was worried all the time, worry, worry, worry all the time for the things that had to be done. And for things that wouldn't even happen. I mean, imagining things that could happen and when I woke up in a hospital bed, and the doctors told me like, you were really about to die. I was like, everything that was worrying you in the future. And these things that takes your sleep away, doesn't even happen.

Rodrigo Sanmar 17:50

I mean, you were about to die. And those things were an illusion. I mean, they were never supposed to happen. And you were spending your whole day worrying about nothing. I mean, things that couldn't even happen. I mean, that's why I feel very thankful for the experience I had, I mean, at the moment, it was very hard, especially for my family because I was in a coma.

Rodrigo Sanmar 18:10

But for my family it was really hard because they were day by day, you know, like fighting the circumstances and dealing with the fact that I could probably not wake up the next day. So for me when I came back, it was like a rush of happiness and consciousness and love and it was like an orgasm for me when I came back from the coma. I was like I can't believe how peaceful I can feel now I mean, it was like a baggage relief you know, from years and years of being holding on to things that didn't even matter to me.

Rodrigo Sanmar 18:50

And and now I'm very thankful to you not only for this space to chat with me but also for creating this podcast will share so many insights and wisdom from the people who went through these things because I'm convinced that we don't have to get to that point you know, to realize and to wake up to the life that we have now.

Sooner Rather Than Later

Bill Gasiamis 19:22

I'm convinced to it's possible to get there before we had a stroke or a bleed in the brain and nearly died. It's something dramatic has to happen to change for people to do that and I'm not sure what it would have been for me this is the weird thing

is sometimes people ask me about the stroke and asked me you know, with all the things that I'm doing what I change anything? etc.

Bill Gasiamis 19:48

I would definitely not want to have a stroke. But if I didn't have it and survive it and then go through all the trouble of rehabilitation learning how to walk again, brain surgery, recovery, if I didn't go through all of that, maybe I would have been 10 years down and something more dramatic would have happened, my health would have been less looked after I would have been more unhealthy, and I would have died from a heart attack or something else.

Bill Gasiamis 20:15

And I don't know, if I could have had any lessons that were as dramatic as the stroke that would have woken me up before I got sick Do you know, it's really, really difficult for me to put myself in a position with the kind of mentality that I had, the kind of negative mindset that I had, whether or not I would have got to a situation in my life and a light would have come up, gone on.

Bill Gasiamis 20:48

And it would have said, It's time for you to change Bill, before things get worse. I think in the past, I was so thick, that something really hard had to happen for me to actually wake up, I think that's the only way that I would have woken up. So I'm grateful for it as well as preferred not to have it. Absolutely.

Rodrigo Sanmar 21:11

I completely agree with you. And I have thought about this so many times, because you have to put in the balance what you gain. And what you lose, from before and after. And, and in my case, as I was telling to you I'm very, very thankful for having went through that experience. I also tell so many people that I would love for so many people who would be able to go through an experience aside from this, but only the good part.

Rodrigo Sanmar 21:42

I mean, of course I don't want everyone to have a stroke and to have two weeks in a coma and a hospital and people suffering of course not. But I would definitely would love to everyone could have access to the connection I have now with myself after the stroke. I mean, as you were saying, I mean, it's better if you don't have it.

Rodrigo Sanmar 22:04

But in my case, in the analogy that you were making earlier, in my case, what would have happened, if I wouldn't have the stroke, it will be really, really terrible. Because I would have spent the rest of my life sleeping as I was before my stroke. And I wouldn't change it there is no chance I would like to go back to who I was before the stroke. I don't know if I'm telling this great or you get it

Bill Gasiamis 22:37

Perfect. I'm curious, right? So, right now, I think there's a bit of a situation in the world and the entire planet. All the countries in the world where freedom of speech is under attack, I feel like we are being censored by governments. We're being censored by social media giants.

Bill Gasiamis 22:58

We're being censored by corporations and a whole bunch of different people including, and of course, I'm referring to the last few years, the COVID outbreak and all the things that we could and couldn't say all the things that we're being controlled in Melbourne, in Australia, where I'm from, we were in lockdown for two years, two entire years.

Bill Gasiamis 23:23

And this situation has become crazier in the last few years than I ever remember in my life. So right now, how are you still passionate about the fact that we still have these issues in society, like freedom of speech? And are you as motivated as you used to be to raise awareness in that space while you're doing other things?

Rodrigo Sanmar 23:53

What a beautiful question. I definitely don't want to go so close to the violence I did with that documentary that I was making when I had the stroke. I mean, it wasn't only that it wasn't only the documentary it was a bunch of things that were happening that year. As I was mentioning, I was trying to do everything in 2012. And as the result, I burned myself literally.

Rodrigo Sanmar 24:23

But I'm still passionate about telling stories. I'm still passionate about making films. I love it. I'm still very, very passionate about impacting or creating impact in people's lives. I mean, I do love to create messages that can transform people's life for the better. But the only thing is, I don't want to film the violence and then

put it in a film. I mean, I'm now writing fantasy and fiction and stories that I think that it can also create a huge impact.

Rodrigo Sanmar 25:00

But not putting myself in the in the road that I was because that definitely I can tell you, I don't want to keep going in that same way. But I do feel very passionate about trying to wake people up. I mean, I don't want to sound show off or things like that, but I do think that there's a lot of people sleeping. And I also feel blessed to have that this hit from reality, to be able to reconnect with myself to be able to befriend myself again, and to reconnect and to give myself priority before everything and everyone else. And that takes me out of bed every morning.

Bill Gasiamis 25:49

I think Rodrigo, you nailed it, you said exactly. The right response, it was that there's still a way to tell stories, without making yourself unwell in the process of developing that story and finding the information for that story and helping people to wake up.

Bill Gasiamis 26:09

Because that's what your documentary about freedom of speech does, it helps people to wake up and it's not that you're more awake than they are, we're not talking about that we're not saying that you're better than them, what we're saying is, let's bring some awareness to certain situations that maybe people need to know about. Because the more information people have, the better decisions about their life they can make.

Bill Gasiamis 26:37

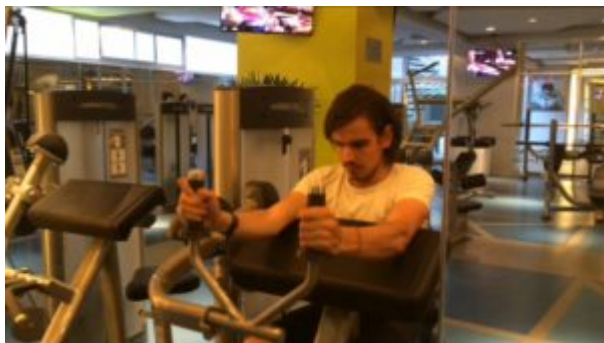
And the more we can influence what happens in society, and the more we can influence what happens in governments. And the more we can hold on to our freedoms and our values and create a situation where all of the people that live with us and around us are hopefully coming together so that we can live a very meaningful life.

Rodrigo Sanmar 27:04

Absolutely. I feel incredibly powerful after my stroke, I feel like I can also reach anything that comes to my mind. I mean, I am still doing films as I used to do films before my stroke, but I know that I can now do films and now I own a sustainable housing company here in Morelia and I am creating like, different

things at the same time, because the limitations of my mind went away.

The Power Of Choice - Rodrigo Sanmar



Rodrigo Sanmar 27:45

I mean, as was saying I was worried all the time, and oh my god, what if this goes wrong, but when you wake up in a hospital bed, knowing that you were about to die like this close to the cliff. I mean, you come back like, I mean, oh my god, I'm still gonna die I mean, why not to give it a try to all the things that I care about. And I'm trying to create a message with my life.

Rodrigo Sanmar 28:14

By creating my projects, I'm creating two fields now. One is fiction. And another one is a documentary film. But this documentary is not about violence. And it's not about bad things I'm creating a documentary film, I would love to tell you a little bit more about this is that it's a film that explores the theory that we as human beings, all of us, as human beings, just by being alive, we have the huge power of decision of choice.

Rodrigo Sanmar 28:47

And we have the power of choice at every single second of our lives. And we have the power to choose if we react to situations in life from fear, or from love. And you know the results. If you act from fear, you have terrible life, you worry, you're always mad at everyone because you are reacting from fear, you're scared, and that won't allow you to live a pleasant and beautiful life as we can.

Rodrigo Sanmar 29:20

And in the other hand, if you react from love, you will have such a beautiful life because you will have beautiful relationships, you will have beautiful projects you will have. But that's the main target of the documentary film, trying to tell everyone that it's only a choice that you can take to change and transform your

entire life.

Bill Gasiamis 29:44

It's so interesting, acting from fear is actually a really difficult thing to do because I've done it before and I try not to do it as much as I used to and I try to become aware of myself when I'm doing it. So acting from fear, is your might you're using fear to motivate you. Because you're afraid of something. And you're doing most of that in your head.

Bill Gasiamis 30:13

That's where you're creating the majority of the fear and the action, to take action, on fear and because of fear, you're taking action with your gut, and your gut is fearful. That's what's happening. When you're taking action from love. And you choose love, you're basically going to your heart, that's where the decision is being made.

Bill Gasiamis 30:35

And, if you can choose love, and go to your heart, you're making decisions that are best for you and best for the world. But there's difficult decisions to make that sometimes that are best for you, and best for the world that other people are going to be upset about. And that sometimes can cause fear for some people.

Bill Gasiamis 31:01

And it's this loop that if you're just in it, and you're not noticing it, and you're not aware of it, you become all consumed by it. And your whole life is a reaction, none of your life becomes a conscious decision-making planned-out process, it all becomes I'm responding to other elements around me and none of it is about what I want, or what I want to achieve, or what I want to plan for, or focus or work towards.

Bill Gasiamis 31:39

And I think there you go, I think that's a beautiful story to tell people and to give them the opportunity to understand the difference between acting out of fear and acting out of love. And what's required. acting out of love is not easy. What's required is to put yourself first and to put yourself in a situation where you have to now tackle some difficult things. And some of those things might be when you act out of love that might upset other people.

Rodrigo Sanmar 32:10

Absolutely. And there's some people that question themselves, like, Why do all these terrible things happen to me? And then the meaning of this story, I'm trying to create is that they can change it. I mean, it's a daily process where you have to recognize where are you reacting to life from, I have five characters in this documentary. They're all women.

Rodrigo Sanmar 32:43

And they're all women that have been through very, very difficult situations in their lives, different kinds of situations, all of them. And they all live in different countries, but they are women that choose not to play the victim, and not to sit down to cry because of what happened to themselves.

Rodrigo Sanmar 33:01

But instead, they choose to learn, grow, and became powerful women after the situation. So if they can, and if we could get up from the hospital bed, and you know, and do what we had to do to continue our life not only continue to our lives but improve our lives and to live the lives that we want to live. I mean, I think everybody can do it, because we all have the power to choose.

Bill Gasiamis 33:33

I'm curious about the men you say your documentary is about five women, do men find it harder to go to this place of acting out of love instead of fear?

Rodrigo Sanmar 33:49

Amazing question. Nobody asked that before but it's great. No, it's really casually they were all five women, I didn't decide that they were going to be women. They just showed up. The first girl showed up and she motivated me to tell the story. But then came the second one and the third one and then I ended up having five women and there's no reason of gender you know, it was just the situation and I'm gonna tell you that the only man figure or character that will probably not appear but participate in the study will be myself.

Switching Mindsets

Rodrigo Sanmar 34:37

I mean, I was able to see these characters these women, I think only because I went through a difficult situation by myself. So I have a very clear view in front of me. I have it very graphic in front of me. I had to take the decision when I was in

a wheelchair after the accident. I was depressed I was mad, I didn't want to eat, I didn't want to speak to anyone, I was in my darkroom I wanted no contact with the world because I was mad at the world and myself and everybody.

Rodrigo Sanmar 35:10

So it was a process, a complicated process. But suddenly, something happened. That made me realize that that was the only way that I wasn't going out of the situation I was stuck in. So I had to make this switch in my mindset. But it was, I have it very clear in front of my mind, it was switched my mindset that allowed me to start eating a bunch of food, making exercising the very first second in the morning, I was able to get up from the wheelchair, and, and in my mind was able to do that I think everyone's mind is able to create the life they want to live and to get unstuck.

Bill Gasiamis 36:01

You know, that dark space you were in where you didn't want to see anyone talk to anyone be around anyone? Did you know that that was necessary for your next phase? Or were you there unwillingly worried about being so withdrawn and in such a terrible state. For me when I was in that dark stages, initially, I didn't realize that it was necessary for me to be there, because there was something to learn there.

Bill Gasiamis 36:32

And at the beginning, I didn't enjoy it. I didn't like it, I couldn't do it. Not that I enjoyed it later. But later, I took a different mindset to what it was about. Okay, this is part of the cycle, it's part of the down part of the cycle, if I stay there for a little while, and I allow it to go through the cycle and pass by itself, I'm going to be out of it soon and I'll learn something.

Bill Gasiamis 36:59

And usually when I did that, I was out of it quick, and I learned something sooner. When you were in that dark time. How did you respond to that? Like, were you okay to be there? Did you feel okay being there? Or was it something that you needed to shift?

Rodrigo Sanmar 37:20

I was leaving a nightmare, I had this huge battle inside my head. I'm not gonna tell you never, never, never happened to through my mind, the word suicide

never, never never. But I was really having a terrible time. And it was unbearable, the situation in my head, because I was like, I was convinced that my life was over that my world fell apart.

Rodrigo Sanmar 37:48

I mean, I was in a very dark place, as you were saying, but I think the community around me, my family, my friends, they never allowed me to go deeper in that dark hole. And, that energy around me realize made me realize that I wasn't alone, that there was an energy full of love surrounding me.

Rodrigo Sanmar 38:13

And that I could take advantage of that to you know, to leave that dark place where I was. So there was a hit something hit me one day, and it was like, Rodrigo! Stand up you can't get close in this thing. Because you keep digging.

Bill Gasiamis 38:34

Yeah. And, you know, that something that hit you? Do you know what it is? Can you describe it?

Rodrigo Sanmar 38:41

It's very difficult to mm, I haven't been able to describe it yet. I keep working on that. But there's, there was a clear vision, as I told you, right now, there was a very clear vision, that that place would only take me deeper, I mean, that if I could, that if I could go and take this switch. I mean, this switch of mindset, I would probably end up in a very, very bad place.

Bill Gasiamis 39:20

Yeah, I think there's gonna be a lot of people who recognize what you're saying, maybe they're in that situation right now. And maybe they're having a moment where they're about to switch over from one way to the other way. I think it's very valuable to do that and to just get curious about it. So for me what I tried to do what I learned after I did a lot of personal development, training.

Bill Gasiamis 39:44

What I learned was that I could get curious about what I was experiencing rather than overthinking and worry about it. I could just ask different questions about it. You know, something like, why am I in this situation? Or what can I learn from this? Or how long is this going to last? Or instead of I hate being here, I don't want to be here. I don't want to do this.

Bill Gasiamis 40:11

It's more empowering to just ask questions out of curiosity, than make statements of fact, like, I hate this. I don't want to be this, this is too hard. That might be the case. But for me, I think it was better that I just became curious about, here's somewhere I've never been before. This is interesting. Wow, I wonder what I'm going to learn from this.

Bill Gasiamis 40:37

So that's kind of the approach that I took. And it didn't work straight away. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't good at it all the time. But I have got a bit of a habit now. And I can now go through the process of being in a tough time. And then, just kind of sitting in it for a little bit. And then getting comfortable being uncomfortable, and not minding that I'm uncomfortable.

Intro 41:05

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, and doctors will explain things that obviously, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask.

Intro 41:29

If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation, stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you it's called seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke.

Intro 41:48

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.

Rodrigo Sanmar 42:08

Was thinking about something listening to you. Probably less than a year after my stroke, I found out that a friend of the family went through a similar situation. Exact same situation brain hemorrhage. And my first instinct reaction was like,

Please take me right now to where she is. I mean, like in this moment, I have to be by her side. Because I know how dark it will get for her right now.

Rodrigo Sanmar 42:43

And it doesn't have to be that way. I mean, if someone would tell me, you know, the process and experience and that the world wouldn't completely fall, it would be a lot easier for me. And so I went there and I was able to talk to her and firsthand, right after her accident. I mean, when she was awake, obviously. And I spent the whole day just speaking with her, and trying to calm her down and letting her know that the world would still go around. And her life wouldn't end at that moment, you know?

Bill Gasiamis 43:24

Yeah. And it's possible to live a really fulfilled life. Even if you have serious, visible or invisible disabilities, it's really possible we see it all the time. That's the Paralympics full of people who have physical disabilities that are living the best life they can possibly live, you know, and overcoming a lot of difficult times.

Bill Gasiamis 43:46

And I've had so many people on this podcast that are going through things that I can't imagine, because I've never had them, you know, vision problems and hearing problems and all sorts of issues. And yet they still doing amazing things, they still willing to come on to a podcast, they still willing to you know, they're raising their families still somehow, some of them have got one child, some of God's three children.

Bill Gasiamis 44:13

They're still doing all the things that we all do. They just go about it a different way. And of course, they would prefer not to be in that situation where they're doing all those things after a stroke. But a lot of those people are not letting what the stroke did to them or caused to them. Get in the way of living a full life. Of course, they do need to do things differently, right.

Bill Gasiamis 44:38

So they need to when they're tired, they need to rest now. They need to not take on too many things. They need to be able to speak out and say I'm tired. I can't do this. They need to be able to do things that they love and brings joy to their lives so that they're experiencing some joy and some perhaps passion projects.

Bill Gasiamis 44:58

They need to do all sorts of things, what I find is a lot of people after a stroke, they get creative, and they find some way to get some creative energy together and to express themselves in a way that perhaps they haven't expressed themselves before. And that's me, that's classic me. I never knew about podcasts, and you never knew about anything before the stroke, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 45:22

And all of a sudden, now, you know, I'm a podcast, I've done 200 episodes. And I'm talking on a topic I never knew about or never would have talked about before. But through my own experience, and through the amazing community, as soon as I asked them, would you like to be on my podcast? Everyone says yes. Through that we can do this thing that I never, in 100 years would have done if it wasn't for what I went through. It's just unbelievable. And I'm talking to somebody in Mexico now. You know, it's amazing.

Rodrigo Sanmar 46:01

That's amazing. Congratulations for having the mindset because also in the other in the other hand, you probably know this. Well. I mean, there's this beautiful site where people come up, and they get up from the circumstances, and they grew up and they get better, and they get creative.

Rodrigo Sanmar 46:23

But there's also, the other hand, and that's why I found really, really helpful, your podcast, and I'm going to share it with as many people as I can, because I've seen in this world, I've seen so many people sitting down crying their losses, and their shames and their victim roles.

Rodrigo Sanmar 46:43

Oh, no, this happened to me. I mean, my whole life is you know, down I mean, off. And they were like, Dude, we've been through the same thing. I mean, what's making you sitting down on a wheelchair to cry for your situation, and the rest of us fighting to get back our lives and to prove them even better lives? I mean, there's two perspectives, as we were saying, You have always two choices.

Bill Gasiamis 47:13

Yeah, that's exactly what the podcast is about. I was talking about it yesterday to a friend of mine, is the 200 people, or more that have been on the episode on the

podcast already. They are the ones that are like us, they're the ones that have moved beyond that really terrible stage. And they are attempting to learn something and share something from what they've learned.

Bill Gasiamis 47:36

Did you need to head out for a minute, do you need to check something? And as a result of that, what I am very aware of is there's at least another 200 people in the world that are listening to this podcast that are perhaps not at the stage that we are. And what I didn't have when I was going through the tough times at the beginning, 10 years ago, I didn't have a podcast that I could tune into and listen to, there was none of that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 48:10

So what I'm hoping that the podcast is doing is it's finding those people, and they are coming to our stage a little bit quicker than they would have if they didn't find it.

Rodrigo Sanmar 48:24

Absolutely. And I think it's an amazing thing. Really thank you for doing this because I would love to have had this earlier. I mean, I'm on a couple of communities on Facebook or Instagram where stroke survivors are in Spanish as well. And you can see these two poles, mean people fighting, making exercise, creating, working, surviving and there's always stories like "oh my god, what am I going to do my life is over I can do it."

Rodrigo Sanmar 48:59

So we have a responsibility, you and I, and the people who were able to not only survive, but thrive with a different mindset and to be able to build new things. And we need to share this with the people because it will make their road a lot easier than usual.

Bill Gasiamis 49:22

In the English world, I'm noticing that there are more and more people coming online now presenting podcasts in this space. And that's awesome. That's amazing because that means that they're going to reach so many people in the Spanish-speaking world. Is there a lot of content? Are there places where people that only speak Spanish can go to, to listen to podcasts and that type of thing about stroke recovery?

Rodrigo Sanmar 49:49

I haven't research in the podcast area. But there is a lot of information reading in articles and communities, as I was mentioning, groups in Facebook in Spanish. Because you know, in my case, Mexico and Latin America, I mean, it's like, huge amount of people.

Rodrigo Sanmar 50:14

And yes, there's a lot of information. Probably there's a little bit more in English. But I have a lot of information in Spanish. And it will be a good thing to research and to try to help to increase the community about maybe a podcast in Spanish. Do you see yourself like, making your content, subtitles or you know, translated or something like that?

Bill Gasiamis 50:47

It will be lovely

Rodrigo Sanmar 50:48

Because it will increase your community.

Bill Gasiamis 50:51

Yeah, it's such a massive job. As you know, producing, recording, editing a podcast is such a massive job for me, I need help to do it all. So what we do is, we record an episode, it takes usually about an hour, and then I edit it, and then I have somebody transcribe it into English only. And those subtitles go on to the YouTube version of the podcast. And then if somebody wants to get the transcription, they can go to the website recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes.

Bill Gasiamis 51:27

And they can click on the podcast episode that they choose. And then at the top, they can actually see that entire transcription of the entire interview and download a PDF version of it if they want. And that takes about eight or nine hours per episode to do, and I have somebody helping me doing that, right. So if I had to do it in another language, which I have no clue about, I don't understand Spanish. If I had to do it another language. It's very resource heavy.

Bill Gasiamis 52:01

So unless perhaps there's somebody out there who is Spanish speaking and English speaking, and is happy to volunteer and do that for me, that will be fantastic. But at the moment, it's really difficult to do. And I think, I felt like it was

really important to at least have the English transcription because I know that people learn and listen in different ways. So some people enjoy the video. That's why it goes to YouTube.

Bill Gasiamis 52:33

Some people enjoy listening in the car, or on the train or wherever they are, that's why I put it on audio. And then some people and I do sometimes I like to print out things on PDF and circle things that I like, sometimes I'll put that on my bookshelf, a PDF that I printed. So I thought that it was necessary to have at least three ways to consume it differently. But never considered another language.

Rodrigo Sanmar 53:02

I was just thinking about it, because probably, I mean, I'm gonna do some research about if there's someone making a podcast about these issues in Spanish, and there will probably be some kind of collaboration but I just imagined this in my head and I would let you know if that happens some time

Life After Brain Hemorrhage



Bill Gasiamis 53:22

That will be fine, that will be perfectly fine. So how long were you in rehabilitation for and doing all the recovery stuff after your stroke?

Rodrigo Sanmar 53:33

Okay, I spent six months on a wheelchair after the stroke, then I was able to get up and I started walking with I don't know how you say (inaudible) not one stick but two sticks.

Bill Gasiamis 54:05

Yeah some kind of like a cane or something.

Rodrigo Sanmar 54:09

And then I started walking with a stick and then I decided to take the stick away, only it was a decision of myself because I realized that I was hanging myself into the stick, all the weight of my body. So I decided to drop it. And when I started walking by myself, I started also making a little exercise, like jogging a little bit. Then I started jumping in the pool and I started making little movements to swim.

Rodrigo Sanmar 54:54

I think it was about an intense one year like very, very, very intense. But until today, I keep doing rehab almost every day. I mean, the first years always in a clinic and with specialist people and trainers and therapists. But then I learned so much over the years, from taking a lot of therapies and different techniques that I'm now able to do my rehab and my exercises and my therapy every day by myself.

Rodrigo Sanmar 55:31

And I still go to the pool, and I still go jogging up and I do a little Pilates and I do a little Yoga and I have tried, pretty much everything. A funny story I used to live in Madrid 10 years ago, before my accident. And my best friend, when I was living in Madrid, he was a guy from Chile. And he was a doctor, well, a master in neuroscience therapy.

Rodrigo Sanmar 56:08

And it was pretty funny, because at that moment, we didn't realize that I was going to need that, that specialty that he was studying, right? Then I came back to Mexico. And he went back to Chile. And when I had my stroke, when I was able to be independent again, after a lot of rehab, I took a trip to Chile, and I was on a workshop with him that he created he and a yoga teacher created a workshop for me.

Rodrigo Sanmar 56:43

And we created this thing that was called Urban therapy, we went to travel through South America, and you know, jump in a plane, jump in a boat, jump into the taxi, run to get the bus. And then he was correcting every single one of my moments on the road. And I love that urban therapy, we name it.

Rodrigo Sanmar 57:05

I mean, there's always a way to get up, to recover, to work, to create your life. It's

only if you're willing to do what it takes to get up. I mean, I've been reading a lot of coaching and self awareness and self growth since my accident, and it gets me to a point where I now feel unbreakable. I mean, I feel like I can actually create and reach everything I want and everything that happens through my mind.

Bill Gasiamis 57:44

Yeah it's true. You can, I mean, if people have built airplanes and created cars, and built roads, and built massive buildings and bridges and everything like that, if people have done all of that stuff, well, there's no reason why we can't do something that's smaller scale than that.

Bill Gasiamis 58:06

And what that demonstrates though, is that nobody can build the airplane on their own, they need a team of people specialists in many, many different fields, to create that, to bring that airplane into a situation where it's possible to fly, you know, and to create that bridge to go two kilometers or 10 miles over water. You have to bring people together, you have to create a community and share the skills that other people have that you don't have.

Bill Gasiamis 58:39

And this is a collaboration, the whole thing is a collaboration. Doing it on your own is not possible. You have to collaborate with other people, offer them something that you can and have the ability to accept something that they are offering you and not to be embarrassed or ashamed that you have to accept some help or that you don't know everything and you don't have all the solutions. You never will have this too many things to know.

Finding Solutions

Bill Gasiamis 59:07

There's no way we're going to know them all, we need to ask people for help and collaborate. And together we can achieve a lot more. But definitely, in the mind, is where our biggest weaknesses are, in the mind is where our biggest obstacles are, if we can focus the mind on solutions rather than problems, you will get more solutions. If you focus on problems, you will get more problems.

Rodrigo Sanmar 59:35

Absolutely. And in every area of our lives, there is this amazing North American

saying that people in the US, they say this phrase that I love that is “The angrier I am the more a**holes I meet”. If you concentrate in this bad mood then of course bad things will have happened to you all day long. I mean, like what you were just saying. If you can’t achieve something because it’s too big, you only have to get a team and the resources, you have to put together to create it.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:00:13

But the important thing is, will you allow yourself to take the first step on the direction that you want to go? Because that’s where everything starts, or you keep the fear that you won’t be able to achieve it because everything will go wrong, and you don’t start anything, never.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:33

Yeah, I completely agree. So in Mexico, what’s the medical system like? I know in America, it’s a decent medical system, but they have some challenges with a lot of people if you don’t have insurance, you don’t get good support, you have to pay a lot of money to become healthy and you live with a debt.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:00

In Australia, our medical system is paid by the government, through our taxes, but it’s all done by the government. What’s it like in Mexico, how does the medical system work there?

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:01:14

Not that good. In my particular case, I didn’t have an insurance at the moment. So my family had to pay for everything. And it was very expensive, thank God, my brothers and my family got together and they were able to went through the situation and to keep me alive. It sounds hard, but it was like that.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:01:46

There’s many people that can’t have what I have, especially with private doctors, private hospital, because when my accident happened, my friends took me to a public hospital that was closed from where we were. And kept me on the waiting floor for so many hours, I spent 36 hours with my brain hemorrhage in the hospital. And they didn’t know what to do. I mean when situation was coming like really worrying.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:02:26

My brother traveled from a different city, and he moved everything he needs to

move to put me in a private hospital and get me a private doctor, and they saved my life that way. Because I have no idea what would happen if my family wouldn't have put the resources and the energy and the efforts to keep me alive, I wouldn't be here talking with you right now.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:02:49

That simple. And there's a public health system, but it's not that efficient. And also, not everybody has access to it. I mean, it's not universal. So there's this new government, well, not that new, it's for four years now. I'm not gonna get political, but it's kind of unusual regimen, here in Mexico.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:03:19

We've been through probably 80 years of, of the same regimen or political system, that it's kind of right wing. And there was a lot of corruption, a lot of bad people doing bad things in the government and we're very used to it. I mean, all my life has been like that, until I'm not sure because it's working on it right now. And I'm not sure if this government is going to change it, but I think they're trying to change things.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:03:54

They're trying to break corruption, like, totally. And they're trying to care more for the people and for the people who have less money, and not trying to protect corporates and to allow them not to pay taxes, just because they are friends with the politicians. And so I'm trying to trust that things are changing a little bit right now.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:04:20

And they are putting an effort on making Universal Health System free for everyone. And I hope they can make it. I mean, you can change the whole thing in three or six years, because it's been bad for 80. But I hope that could change a little bit.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:40

Yeah. Fair enough. I understand how difficult it can be. So when do you expect your current project that you're working on to be complete and available for people to review the documentary that you're doing?

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:04:57

I hope it becomes civilized next year, because it's been on my head for more than

a year now, but I'm working also on. Look, I'm gonna show you real quickly, this house where I am now, I built it. This is the one of my sustainable housing projects. Look at the view.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:18

Aha, wow. Yes.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:05:22

And these are houses with low impact, completely solar powered energy. And some factories make them more sustainable than our regular house. But it was a huge success. This small project, it was like my pilots, to see if there were planes. And I was doing construction, and it was sold out already.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:05:55

So there's a lot of people who wants these kinds of houses. So I'm starting now a project that is 10 times bigger, now I'm building 100 houses. So that has delayed my documentary film a little bit , but I'm committed to finish the script this year, and probably 50%, to be able to release it next year if possible.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:21

Fantastic. Well done. Congratulations. Thank you so much for being on the podcast. And I look forward to following your growth and your path, man. It's really lovely to hear from you. And to get somebody reached out from Mexico, you're the first person in Mexico to contact me to be on the podcast. So it's really amazing. I really am grateful.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:06:52

Thank you for the time, I'm grateful too, I mean, it's very fulfilling to have these conversations and you look like an amazing person, like very connected and conscious and I thank you for the time and for the sharing, the energy. Let's keep in touch. I'll keep you posted on the documentary. And if I find some someone who could be good for collaboration with Spanish podcasts about the related topics, it will be amazing to let you know.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:23

Thanks, Rodrigo.

Rodrigo Sanmar 1:07:25

Thank you for your time.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:28

Well, thanks so much for joining us on today's episode. Rodrigo is an amazing guest. He's doing great things. And he's an example of how much you can do and achieve after stroke. Now he's been on the journey for 10 years, similar to me. But that doesn't mean anything, it means that you can work towards your goal, and you can move towards achieving something every single day just by focusing on solutions, rather than problems.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:56

To learn more about my guests, including the links to find them on social media. To download a full transcript of the entire interview, please go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes. If you would like to support this podcast, the best way to do it is to leave a five star review, and a few words about what the show means to you, on iTunes, and on Spotify.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:20

If you are watching on YouTube, comment below the video, click the Like button. Click the subscribe button. Click the notifications bell so that you can get notifications of future episodes as they become available. Sharing the show with family and friends on social media will make it possible for people who may need this type of content to find it easier, and that may make a massive difference to someone that is on the road to recovery after their own experience with stroke. Thanks so much for tuning in. I look forward to seeing you on a mixed episode.

Intro 1:08:56

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Intro 1:09:30

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Intro 1:09:51

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Intro 1:10:17

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