

Life After Stroke: Polo Gomez's Journey from Disability to Ability

Life After Stroke: Overcoming Challenges and Finding New Strength

Life after a stroke often presents a new reality for survivors, marked by physical, emotional, and cognitive challenges. Whether it's adjusting to physical deficits, such as impaired mobility or speech difficulties, or navigating the emotional toll of such a life-altering event, the journey of recovery can feel overwhelming. However, with determination, support, and the right approach to rehabilitation, many stroke survivors find ways to regain independence and even discover new strengths.

In this post, we explore the common challenges faced in life after a stroke and offer guidance on how survivors can navigate their recovery while embracing hope and resilience.

The Immediate Aftermath of Stroke

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted or reduced, depriving brain tissue of oxygen. This can lead to significant damage, often resulting in long-term disabilities. The immediate symptoms may vary depending on the type and severity of the stroke, but common issues include paralysis on one side of the body, difficulties with speech, vision problems, and loss of balance or coordination.

The early days following a stroke can be critical for recovery, and immediate medical intervention plays a key role in minimizing the extent of damage. However, the challenges don't end once the initial medical emergency has passed. For many survivors, the true work begins in rehabilitation and adjusting to life after a stroke.

Coping with Physical Deficits

One of the most challenging aspects of life after stroke is dealing with **physical deficits**. Many survivors experience some form of paralysis or reduced function, particularly on one side of the body. This can affect the ability to walk, use the arms and hands, or perform daily tasks like dressing or eating.

Physical therapy is often a cornerstone of stroke recovery, helping survivors regain mobility and function. Regular, targeted exercises can improve muscle strength, flexibility, and coordination, while adaptive tools such as walkers or special utensils can make daily life easier.

Progress may be slow, but every small achievement—whether it's walking independently or regaining the ability to perform a once-routine task—can be a huge milestone in the journey toward recovery.

Addressing Cognitive and Emotional Changes

In addition to physical challenges, **cognitive deficits** such as memory problems, difficulty concentrating, or trouble with problem-solving are common after stroke. Survivors may also struggle with **aphasia**, a condition that affects the ability to speak or understand language.

To cope with these challenges, speech therapy and cognitive rehabilitation are essential components of post-stroke care. These therapies aim to retrain the brain to improve communication and thinking skills, helping survivors rebuild their confidence in daily interactions and regain a sense of normalcy.

Emotionally, the experience of a stroke can be overwhelming. Feelings of frustration, sadness, or anger are natural as survivors adjust to a new way of living. In some cases, post-stroke depression may develop. Seeking support from mental health professionals, stroke support groups, or loved ones can make a significant difference in managing the emotional burden of stroke recovery.

Adapting to a New Normal

Adapting to life after stroke often means embracing a **new normal**. Daily activities that were once taken for granted may now require more effort or modifications. It's common for survivors to feel a sense of loss regarding their

previous level of independence. However, many stroke survivors discover that adapting to their new reality can lead to unexpected growth and resilience.

Setting realistic goals is a crucial part of recovery. While full recovery may not always be possible, survivors can focus on small, incremental gains that bring a sense of achievement and progress. With the right mindset, challenges can become opportunities for growth.

The Importance of a Supportive Community

Recovery from a stroke is rarely a solo journey. The support of family, friends, caregivers, and healthcare professionals is invaluable in helping survivors navigate the ups and downs of recovery. Encouragement from loved ones can provide the emotional fuel needed to stay motivated, while healthcare professionals offer the necessary expertise to guide rehabilitation.

In many cases, connecting with other stroke survivors through support groups or online communities can provide a sense of camaraderie. Knowing that others have faced similar challenges and made progress can be a powerful source of hope.

Taking Control of Health

Preventing another stroke is a primary concern for many survivors. After the first stroke, individuals are at a higher risk for future events, especially if underlying conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease are not well-managed.

Lifestyle changes play a critical role in long-term recovery and stroke prevention. Eating a heart-healthy diet, engaging in regular physical activity, managing stress, and following prescribed medication regimens are all essential steps in maintaining health and reducing the risk of another stroke.

By staying proactive and prioritizing health, survivors can take control of their well-being and reduce their chances of experiencing another stroke in the future.

Life After Stroke: Moving Forward with Hope

While life after a stroke may look different, it doesn't mean the journey ahead is without possibility. Stroke recovery is often a marathon rather than a sprint,

requiring patience, persistence, and adaptability. Each small victory, whether it's physical, cognitive, or emotional, is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

For stroke survivors, recovery is not just about regaining what was lost but also about discovering new ways to live a fulfilling life. With a supportive community, the right therapeutic interventions, and a mindset focused on growth, many survivors find that life after a stroke is a new chapter filled with hope, strength, and the potential for continued progress

Life After Stroke: Interview With Polo Gomez

Stroke recovery is a long journey, but with determination, it's possible to turn disability into ability. Learn how Polo Gomez is overcoming stroke deficits.

[Polo's Instagram](#)

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Introduction - Life After Stroke



Polo Gomez 0:00

Hello everybody, and welcome to episode 323 of the Recovery After Stroke Podcast. Today, I'm thrilled to introduce Polo Gomez, an industrial worker from Pensacola, Florida, who is sharing his incredible story of resilience after suffering a hemorrhagic stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 0:20

Polo's journey began while he was on a job site, suddenly experiencing the classic signs of stroke, including a drooping face and loss of mobility on his left side. What followed was a whirlwind of emergency intervention and months of rehabilitation. A Polo's determination to regain his independence and strength never wavered.

Bill Gasiamis 0:44

In this episode, Polo discusses the emotional and physical challenges he faced as a stroke survivor, how he copes with the deficits left by the stroke and his journey toward recovery. He also shares how he shifted his mindset from frustration to gratitude, choosing to focus on what he could achieve rather than what he had lost. Polo's story is one of grit, faith and perseverance, offering a powerful message for stroke survivors and their families.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13

Before we dive into Polo's story, I'd like to remind you that if you find value in these episodes, and you'd love to see the recovery after stroke podcast continue, because you're getting a lot of value as well personally, and you hope that other people will also find the podcast and get value from the podcast. Then you can

support the show through Patreon, at patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke and be a part in confirming the success and the ongoing ability for me to record more podcast episodes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:51

Your support helps keep the podcast going and ensures that we can continue to share these inspiring and hopeful stories with our community of stroke survivors. Every contribution makes a difference, and I'm truly grateful for your support.

Bill Gasiamis 2:06

Polo Gomez, Welcome to the podcast.

Polo Gomez 2:10

Glad to be here.

Bill Gasiamis 2:12

Glad to have you tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

Symptoms And Initial Reactions

Polo Gomez 2:14

Well, I was out, I work, I travel a lot for work. So I do industrial solar, we do like Solar farms. We build solar farms, and I was working, and I was having a meeting and right when the meeting was over, some papers sent seemed to fell on the ground, they fell off my hands into the ground, so I sat down and picked them up, and when I picked them up, I just all of a sudden felt my face drop on my left side. So I stood up, I was still able to stand up and walk towards the office.

Polo Gomez 2:54

And I spoke to one of the engineers and I was like 'Hey man, I think something's going on. And I told them, she's like 'Why? And I told her, I said 'Well, I think that my the left side of my face is drooping, and she's like 'Oh, I think it is. She's like 'I think you're having a stroke. So she called 911, and they they made her, they made me do a test with my hands, and I guess I didn't pass him they're like 'Yeah, he's having a stroke. So they called an ambulance, the ambulance got me off of the job site, and then a helicopter picked me up and flew me to the to the hospital.

Bill Gasiamis 3:24

How far away hospital were you?

Polo Gomez 3:27

Probably about four to five miles away, but I got there pretty quick because of the helicopter ride.

Bill Gasiamis 3:35

And whereabouts were you in the in the in the area, a major city? Where were you?

Polo Gomez 3:40

Yeah, I was in Pensacola, Florida, so shout out to Sacred Heart Hospital, they were real, they acted fast, took real good care of me.

Bill Gasiamis 3:51

So other than that, Polo, did you notice any other symptoms, any other signs that something might be wrong, the days leading or the weeks leading to that day?

Polo Gomez 4:00

You know what couple couple days leading to that? Well, I would have some like, a slight headaches, but I thought it was because I had a toothache at one point, and I thought that's what it was, so I would pump some Advils, and it would go away. But never did I feel dizzy or nothing, you know, nothing out of the norm. And then when that hit me, all of a sudden, it just, it kind of freaked me out.

Bill Gasiamis 4:27

What did you lose? Any of your abilities, your legs, your arms. Did anything stop working at the time just before you got to hospital?

Polo Gomez 4:38

No, my legs did because when she's when that when my when my coworker sat me down, she's like 'Hey, I'm going to go get help, wait for me here. I was like 'Heck, no, am I going to stay here? And I try to walk out behind her, and I went to the ground.

Polo Gomez 4:50

So yeah, my left side gave out, so I mean, they told me at the they told me at the at the hospital, that luckily they reacted that fast, they did. If not, I woulda, I woulda started losing my right side and maybe my vision and my voice. So, you

know, I was very thankful, very blessed that, you know, nothing, nothing else happened more than what, what did take place? You know.

Bill Gasiamis 5:19

What kind of stroke was it?

Polo Gomez 5:21

It was a hemorrhagic stroke, hemorrhagic yeah.

Stroke Caused By High Blood Pressure

Bill Gasiamis 5:27

And do they know what caused the bleeding?

Polo Gomez 5:30

High blood pressure.

Bill Gasiamis 5:33

Were you aware of the high blood pressure?

Polo Gomez 5:36

Yes, but since I, like I said, I travel a lot for work, I was out of medication, and I had to go get an evaluation so I can get more meds, and I didn't make time for it. It's not that I didn't have time, that's just an excuse, you know. I could have made time for it, but it's just you don't feel bad, so I'm like 'Man, I could wait. Well, now I know that you it can't, you know?

Bill Gasiamis 5:59

So you had high blood pressure for many years you'd been diagnosed.

Polo Gomez 6:05

No, couple months, yeah, a couple months.

Bill Gasiamis 6:12

Man, that's full on, so you got diagnosed. How did they find that you had high blood pressure? Was just random checkup, or did you have a plan?

Polo Gomez 6:22

Yeah, it was a random checkup, I went. Because I was there was times where I'd get to my office and I'd get in front of my computer, and as soon as I'd get there,

I'd get real like, I could not keep my eyes open. It just felt real tired. Sometimes when I'd be driving, I'd be driving perfectly fine, and then all of a sudden, I just get real tired. So I went and got a little checkup, and they told me, that's what it was.

Bill Gasiamis 6:50

How old are you?

Polo Gomez 6:52

I'm 38 years old.

Bill Gasiamis 6:54

And how long ago did this happen?

Polo Gomez 6:57

This just happened, January 29th.

Bill Gasiamis 6:59

So not long ago.

Polo Gomez 7:01

Yeah, not long ago.

Bill Gasiamis 7:03

And how long did you spend in hospital?

Polo Gomez 7:05

A month, I was in there for a month. Then they, they released me, but I had to go to a therapy facility. So I went there for 14 days because they didn't take my insurance, and it was we had to pay out of pocket, and it was like, like 27,000 for those 14 days, so there's no way I could afford that. So I was there for 14 days, and then after that I got I started going to therapy.

Bill Gasiamis 7:31

So now we're in August of 2024 it's been about eight months, something like that, right? Yes, what are you recovering from now? What are you dealing with now?

Polo Gomez 7:50

Well, like I said, I've been, you know, I watch videos, I try to do a lot of researching, and, you know, and I'm aware that you get your, your the most of

your mobility in the first six months and with an intense therapy. But I feel like my therapy was never really intense, but I can, I went into my physical therapy place in a wheelchair and you just, Friday was my last day, and I came out of there walking with a Hemi Walker.

Polo Gomez 8:22

You know, so my arm, I really haven't gotten no much movement out of it, and that's really what I'm trying to currently work on now, get more therapy on it. But you know, I've been told by a lot of a lot of different positions that to not expect a lot more out of my left hand, but I'm a firm believer, you know, and I feel like the man up above is the one that has the last say so, as long as I keep continue to put effort in it, effort into it, you know, I can get to where i i believe i can get to where I need to be.

Bill Gasiamis 8:54

Yeah, go for it, I also believe that nobody should tell you you shouldn't expect anymore. It might be accurate, like statistically and all that kind of stuff, and I'm okay with that part of it, but what I don't like about that statement is if the Polo's of the world decide to take that for real and then not do anything to rehabilitate that at all, so you're never going to know, because if you, if you make the decision to not do anything for that arm.

Bill Gasiamis 9:23

Well then 100% that arm will not recover, but if you're going about recovery and you're attempting to recover it, well there is a chance that it will do something, and that's what I don't like about doctors saying, don't expect anything more from it, like it's kind of, I know where they're coming from, but I don't think it's appropriate, I don't think it's useful to say that to somebody.

Polo Gomez 9:46

Yeah, I don't either, at first it kind of kind of brought me down, but then, like I said, I started thinking about it I'm like 'Wait a minute, you know. The man up above is the one that has the last word, and as long as I try, I think if I put my mind to it. I'm able, I'm capable of doing whatever I put my mind to.

Intro 10:03

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? Doctors will explain things, but obviously, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask.

Intro 10:28

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 10:47

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 Gasiamis 11:06

Yeah, it could be a longer journey for that arm, right? It could take a lot longer than what we want, or whatever, but I don't like it. I don't like hearing that and then thinking that that might make somebody decide not to try at all, that's the worst thing that can happen is you give up completely on that arm, and then you'll get the result that the doctor said 100% of the time.

Life After Stroke And Impact on Work and Family Life



Bill Gasiamis 11:31

You know, so good on you. I like that attitude there Polo, so how did all this stuff impact your work? Like you go from being an installer of solar equipment and all that type of thing, and now you're not able to do that work initially.

Polo Gomez 11:52

So I was a supervisor, but so it impacted me, because I used to have to walk the field and make sure everything was in in order, you know, in line, and well, I couldn't do that no more, so I ended up being out of work for 180 days, and for legal purposes, they had to release me. So now, I don't have a job no more. But, I mean, I can't let it get me down, you know what? You gotta keep.

Polo Gomez 12:16

Continue to fight and then hopefully I keep it's like I told my my therapist, I said, Listen, if I was to get 70-75% to me, that's 100% because, you know, I don't have that mobility in my arm, so 75 to me would be 100%. And that's just what my goal is. Just try to get whatever I can out of it and continue on with my life, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 12:38

And with your family situation. What was that like? Are you married? You had family?

Polo Gomez 12:45

No, sir. I have a girlfriend that, luckily, she stayed by my side. She helps me out with whatever she can. My parents, I still have my eye to move back in with my parents. My parents and my brother, they've, I mean, they've been the world.

They they've been there for me since day one, helped me out with everything. When they get home, they're like, Alright, it's time to get up and let's, let's start working on something, you know, so I got 150% back up from them.

Polo Gomez 13:13

So that's also, I think that's also a big, a big plus. You know, my friends, I have a lot of friends that never left my side. I mean, my hometown is like, 9 hours away from where I was, and when that occurred, my friends from back home were up there, you know. And since the day one, they, I got videos where they're helping me out of the wheelchair, helping me walk, trying to get me to walk. So, I mean, I have a support from every direction.

Bill Gasiamis 13:43

There's a lot of blessings there. Your very positive mindset, have you always been that way? Is that the kind of guy you always are, look for solutions, don't focus on the problems?

Polo Gomez 13:54

Yes. I really try, I'm not a guy that stresses a lot about nothing. I feel like there's always a way out of something, you know what I mean?

Bill Gasiamis 14:05

Yeah, I like that, man, that's really really good. It is going to be up and down. You're going to have setbacks, you're going to have wins, you're going to have things that you overcome, you're going to have things that are harder to overcome. But if you keep focusing on the path forward, where the solutions are, then you're likely to achieve them, you know, if you sit and focus on the problems, then you're definitely going to have a ton of problems. You know, there's going to be.

Polo Gomez 14:36

Yeah, sure definitely every life hasn't been the same, you know everything. There's a lot of things that change, as in like, what's that word I'm looking for? Like self care, like I need help when I bathe, you know. But like I said, my brother and my father, they're there 100%, you know, I don't know, I can't thank them enough, it's crazy, independent, you know, be more independent, but I'm getting there.

Polo Gomez 15:11

Like I said to too many, where I'm at now might not be a lot, but, I mean, when I first got out of the hospital, I couldn't sit up in bed. I as soon as they set me up, I'd go back down to either side. And now I can get when I got out of the 14 days that I was in that physical therapy place, I couldn't use the restroom on my own, I couldn't go to the restroom, now I go to the restroom on my own. So, you know, little things like that to me are big thing.

Polo Gomez 15:37

You know, when I when I'm laying, when I'm laying in bed, I try to move my arm, and when it moves a little bit to me, it's, it means it all because I'm like 'Man, I couldn't move it at all. And I'm getting a little moving out of it. It's crazy. It definitely made me value life a lot more. I'll tell you that much, because I was, I'm, I'm not going to say I was a bad person, but I was a little wild.

Polo Gomez 15:57

You know, I'm young. I didn't think twice about doing something dumb, I was crazy. I was a little wild on the wild side. Now, you know, it changed me. I look at things a lot different, I feel like I got a second opportunity at life. So, you know, I sure want to take advantage of it in a whole different way.

Bill Gasiamis 16:23

Alright, completely understand, now with the bleeding, how did they resolve it? Did they have to operate?

Polo Gomez 16:30

No, sir. Yeah they were able to stop the bleeding, and I went and got my second CT or MRI, and they said that everything stopped. So everything's been, everything's been going pretty well, I guess.

Bill Gasiamis 16:48

Yeah.

Polo Gomez 16:49

I didn't know nothing about a stroke. So my my brother was telling me he's like 'Man, when you first got out the hospital, you were talking like nothing was wrong with you, like if you were just going to continue life. So I'm the wise, just didn't know, I didn't know what a stroke, you know, consisted of, or that I if I had a stroke, I couldn't get up and walk the next day. So, you know, and still, to this day, I still try to be positive and be like 'Man, you know, because at first it was

rough.

Polo Gomez 17:14

I'm not going to lie to you, when I get out of bed, when I wake up in the mornings, and I'd wake up and, you know, look, turn around and look to my right in my wheelchair was there. I'm like 'Man, it's not the same, you know, when people you know, at first, I first, I was a little mad at the world, you know, because I'm like, Why me? You know. But now I think about it, and man, I much rather it happened to me than anybody out of out of my friends or my family members, you know.

Life After Stroke: Lifestyle Changes and Personal Growth

Polo Gomez 17:39

So, you know, I wouldn't want them to go through, nobody to go through this. It's kind of crazy. But, like I said, I'm not happy that it happened. But it really was an eye opener. It made me look at at several different things, several different ways now. So, I mean, things happen for a reason, is what they say so.

Bill Gasiamis 18:00

And you remind me of me.

Polo Gomez 18:06

I was 300 pounds whenever this happened to me, and now I'm now I'm 270 so I've lost a lot of I've lost a lot of weight.

Bill Gasiamis 18:19

So you think the weight had a lot to do with the blood pressure?

Polo Gomez 18:23

That's it, yeah, because, you know, people say stress, but I'm not a, I'm not a type of person that stresses. I don't, if something doesn't get done today at work, get away, if it don't get done today or get done tomorrow. You know what I mean, I'm that type of guy, I don't.

Bill Gasiamis 18:40

Did you smoke?

Polo Gomez 18:44

No, sir, I just drank. I used to drink, so now I don't drink at all.

Bill Gasiamis 18:55

How much did you drink?

Polo Gomez 18:59

Well, it's kind of crazy, because I wouldn't drink during the week, and then I would drink on the weekends. But it's like, I drink on the weekends. Whatever I didn't drink in the week, I'd drink it in the weekend.

Bill Gasiamis 19:09

A lot of alcohol, so too much binge drinking.

Polo Gomez 19:13

Yeah, I used to party a lot. I was just like, I said I was, I come from a Hispanic family. You know, Hispanics, then they party for everything. So it's just, you know like I said it's putting down a lot.

Bill Gasiamis 19:29

You guys can still party, but you just have to do a little less of the alcohol stuff and the smoking stuff and all the stuff that perhaps people did. I get what you're saying when everything is kind of a celebration and everything's going good. You just figure, I can keep going, but you get to 38 and you've been doing it for 20 years, and then it's kind of like, wow, like it's catching up with me, and that's what happens.

Bill Gasiamis 19:52

I got, I had my brain hemorrhoid when I was 37, so I was not doing anything terribly bad, but I'd smoke and drink, not a lot. But after smoking, I started smoking when I was 13, that's a long time, man, you know, but if things catch up with you, and it seems like I'm still young, I'm 37 it's not that much of a big deal, but I've been smoking since I was 13. Like, that's a long time.

Polo Gomez 20:25

Yeah, no, I was drinking the same way, and then get up early. I drink till like two, three o'clock in the morning, then get up at six and go to work. You know, I was putting a beating on myself, I think.

Bill Gasiamis 20:38

Yeah, but yeah without knowing it, yeah.

Polo Gomez 20:41

And now I don't, you know, people say, Oh, you can have a beer or two. I'm like, Nah, I'm too scared of it triggering something, and have going through this again. I don't want to take my chances over a drink of alcohol. You know what I mean?

Bill Gasiamis 20:54

That's why I avoided alcohol for the first five years polo, and I had, maybe in the next, you know, in the sixth year, maybe I had one drink in six months, and I'm talking about literally one drink, and I'd be drunk by the end of the bottle, you know, because I hadn't, I wasn't used to it at all. And now it's the same, we'll go out for dinner or catch up with friends, we'll go to a party.

Bill Gasiamis 21:18

People will come over, and I won't drink unless I'm at my house and I don't have to leave and go anywhere, and even then, I'm only going to have half a drink or one drink, because I lose my balance. The numbness gets worse on my left side, it feels like I'm having a stroke, you know? So what's the point of that? I don't enjoy it at all.

Polo Gomez 21:39

Yeah, now I don't, what I do now is I drink like sparkling water just to make just to trick the brain, I guess, and be there hanging out, but now I don't.

Bill Gasiamis 21:49

Yeah, I'm the same sparkling water with wine with, um, with a wedge of lemon or a wedge of lime and ice, just to make it look like it's a drink.

Polo Gomez 22:00

And then, like I said, I have a very huge, huge group of supportive friends where they don't try to peer pressure me. Oh, drink no, you know? Now, when they come over, they bring me sparkling water with a with a couple limes, you know? I don't, so I don't have that peer pressure, you know what I mean? Or, or they'll call me 'Hey, Is it okay if I bring some alcohol over there? Man, it's fine. I don't, I don't crave it. I don't, because I'm too scared, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 22:28

That is that's perfectly fine, and it's helping you lose weight as well, and the more weight you lose, the the lighter you'll feel on your feet, and that hopefully will support your walking, and it'll make it easier for you to get around and to rehabilitate the walking part.

Polo Gomez 22:45

Yeah, that's, that's what I'm working on. Like I said, I can walk with a Hemi Walker, and then I live like in the block, like in the block of my house, I live right in the center. So I used to only be able to walk from the house to a stop sign last-last week, I was able to walk around the whole block for the first time. So it's coming, you know, slowly but surely, and little stuff like that motivates me.

Bill Gasiamis 23:09

Yeah, it seems little, but it's big, man, it's huge. You're doing a great thing, yeah, by focusing on where you've come and where you started constantly, sort of reflecting back, look what I'm doing now compared to what I was doing a month ago or two months ago. That's how you encourage yourself to keep going after recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 23:27

You know, that's exactly the attitude that you need, any other attitude might get you there, but this type of version of, it's small 'I used to only be able to go to the stop sign, now I go around the block. That's big, man. That's not small, that's huge, and people don't realized.

Polo Gomez 23:45

At first, it was kind of hard. It was kind of hard because I was always, I always try to be the life of the party. I was always the loud, wild one. And then when this happened to me, I didn't want to go out, because I didn't want people like my brother would be like 'Hey, man, let's go out and eat. Neither one to because I didn't we. We're from a small town, so everybody knows everybody.

Polo Gomez 24:02

And I just didn't want nobody to see me like this, you know, because it's not me. And then I did have a couple friends that would go over and did it. As soon as they see me, they started crying. They're like, man, I was just not used to seeing you like this, and but like I said, once I started getting a little bit of movements and

starting doing this and being able to do that, like the other day, I was able to put my shoe on for the first time by myself. So to me, I'm like, Man, I send everybody a picture. Hey, look what I just did. You know, because it's, it's just, it's crazy.

Back To Driving After A Stroke

Bill Gasiamis 24:32

No, it's huge, man, to be celebrating putting on your shoe on for the first time again. It seems like a a small thing. Most people don't pay attention to it. And for you, it's like a big achievement. When we got there, you know, you shoot independence, you know. What about driving? Did they take your license?

Polo Gomez 24:50

No, sir, they didn't. Well, I haven't, I don't know how that works, they gave me a the handicap sticker, but nobody's asked me for my license, or anything about my license, but the other day, like I said, I'm from a small town, and the my primary doctor is only about two miles away from my house, three miles. So my mom's like, hey, you need to try to drive to see if you can drive. So she drove.

Polo Gomez 25:17

She rode with me, but I drove, and I got and I was able to do it right. So I got to the the clinic, and I was, I told my doctor 'Hey, guess what? I just drove here, and she's like 'Well, who cleared you to drive? I'm like, I kind of cleared myself. I guess nobody told me not to, but no, I did well. So I don't know if I'm supposed to talk to somebody about that or not, I don't know how that works.

Bill Gasiamis 25:43

How did I know? Was there any problem with steering with one hand? I imagine that would have been the problem, you probably should adjust the indicator, the hand thing, you know the pole or a steering wheel.

Polo Gomez 25:58

No, I'll be honest with you, no, because I'm right handed as it is, so that's good. And not only that, but when I first started driving, I was always taught to use one foot so, you know, I used, it was it came pretty-pretty natural. I didn't really have a issue. The only weird thing that was kind of funny is that I let go of the steering wheel one time because I thought my left hand had it and it didn't.

Polo Gomez 26:27

But I caught on to that quick, and I'm like No But still, to this time I walk up to a door sometimes, and I feel like my left hand is the one that's reaching to open the door, you know, to grab the doorknob, and it's not so I don't know that's something I'm still trying to get used to.

Bill Gasiamis 26:46

Yeah, so that might be something that you need to consider when you're driving. And you know, they had those adaptive knobs, you know, those knobs, they're like a doorknob. They put it on the steering wheel and swivels so that you can turn the steering with one hand, and then they can adjust the cars in so many ways so that all the signals are in the right position for your hand. But it sounds like it's mostly already Okay. The other thing is, it's automatic, so you don't need to change.

Polo Gomez 27:22

Yeah, and then you know, I've looked into all that stuff, but then I stopped myself. I'm like 'No, wait a minute. I got to try to get back to my normal self, to where I don't have to do any modifications, you know what I mean. So, it's working out so far.

Bill Gasiamis 27:39

Yeah, slowly but surely. Look, it might be a good idea to get an assessment, but I don't know what that means, I don't know how it works in America, nobody came to me either and said 'You've been through brain surgery. These things have happened. You can't walk you can't use your left side. You need to sit another driver's license test, or Nobody did that with me either.

Bill Gasiamis 28:01

So about, I think it would have been maybe about two months after my brain surgery and being released from therapy, I came home walking also, and my left hand was working, but it wasn't working 100% and I just jumped in the car and started driving as well, and I got really tired, I felt fatigued because of all the movement and all the things I had to concentrate on.

Bill Gasiamis 28:37

And my drive was quite a short drive as well, but it was something that I really needed to get used to. But it didn't occur to me to go and get some professional help from a driving instructor for example.

Polo Gomez 28:54

Yeah, I'm gonna have to look into that. Because I don't, I don't. Nobody's my doctor hasn't even mentioned to me to go, you know, talk to somebody, but my brother, like I said, he'll jump on with me, and I always go with somebody, I'm never by myself. But, you know, they, they come on so you can get, you know, used to driving again. So, you know, we go around the block, we go to town, stuff like small stuff like that, not no long trips or nothing, but no, I feel great on in that in that point.

Bill Gasiamis 29:27

Let's pause here for a moment, but don't go anywhere. We'll be back shortly to continue Polo's inspiring journey. Before we return. I'd like to take a moment to mention my book 'The Unexpected Way That A Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened. It's a guide to post-traumatic growth, not just through my own experience, but through the stories of others who have turned their stroke recovery into opportunities for personal transformation.

Bill Gasiamis 29:54

If you're seeking hope and practical advice on navigating life after stroke, this Book is for you, you can find it on Amazon or visit recoveryafterstroke.com/book to learn more. Now back to Polo's incredible journey of overcoming stroke deficits and finding new strength.

Bill Gasiamis 30:17

How about the rest of your energy? Do you get fatigued? Do you feel like you run out of steam during the middle of the day or by the end of the day,

Polo Gomez 30:25

You know what? No, not really, I mean, at first, yes for the first couple, the first couple months, yes, in the morning I I'd sleep in every day, but I didn't have that much energy, but now it's, I feel like I'm gaining that back. I started drinking that mushroom coffee, and it seems to give me a little bit of energy, and it, I mean, I feel, I feel pretty good, and so I also had a sleep apnea, and now I got my CPAP machine. So I even, I get rest, Oh man.

Bill Gasiamis 31:02

So you find a massive difference because of the CPAP. You wear it at night on your face at night, blows oxygen into your body, you wake up rested.

Polo Gomez 31:13

Yes and you don't feel it the first night you use it, except for the first couple times you use it, I want to say the first week or two that you start feeling a real big difference.

Bill Gasiamis 31:26

So you know that mushroom coffee, Lion's Mane, is it lion's mane?

Polo Gomez 31:37

No, the one I drink is that rice.

Bill Gasiamis 31:43

Does it taste any good?

Polo Gomez 31:44

Yeah when I first drank it, I drank it by itself. It kind of tastes like dirt, but then they told me, they told me that I could add a little bit of creamer to it, and I had a hazelnut creamer. Oh, and it tastes great, I drink it every morning.

Bill Gasiamis 32:03

It tastes like the earth, right? I understand. I never had it, and I I'm not sure if I could, but if you can make it taste a little better with a little bit of creamer or some other.

Polo Gomez 32:16

Yeah, I use hazelnut. It tastes it tastes pretty good, yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 32:21

And why did you get onto that mushroom coffee?

Polo Gomez 32:25

Because I ran into it on social media a lot, and I said that it was good to make you focus and and to gain gain energy and help you with your with your sugar levels and stuff like that, because I was pre diabetic, so I tried it. I like it, and it helped. I mean, it feels good.

Bill Gasiamis 32:50

We could, since you've stopped drinking alcohol. Is the pre diabetes settled down as well?

Polo Gomez 32:56

That I don't know. I haven't gone to get new lab work. I'm due for it next month, I believe. So we'll see what they tell me, then.

Bill Gasiamis 33:05

There should be an improvement, because, alcohol causes a lot of well, depending on what you're drinking, actually, what were you drinking? Beer?

Polo Gomez 33:13

Yeah Beer.

Bill Gasiamis 33:16

That does impact diabetes levels and all that type of stuff. It probably makes a lot of things worse. The fact that you're not doing that, you should have seen some kind of an improvement.

Polo Gomez 33:27

Yeah, so my big mistake, I think, was, like that day I got my stroke, I was like, three Red Bulls in that day.

Bill Gasiamis 33:36

Oh man.

Polo Gomez 33:39

So I'm pretty sure that did not help not one bit.

Bill Gasiamis 33:42

Not one bit, all the caffeine pumping into your veins after three bulls. I think it's one Red Bull is I think, like the equivalent of four cups of coffee, and if you're smashing three Red Bulls in a short amount of time, that's like having 12 cups of coffee that's impacting your heart, that's impacting every system in your body, It's increasing your blood pressure, your heart rate, man that's tough.

Polo Gomez 34:08

The sad part about it. Is they didn't even work. I didn't get no energy out of them. I think it was just like a bad habit. That's all it was a bad habit.

Bill Gasiamis 34:19

And you're off them now as well.

Polo Gomez 34:21

Oh yeah, I don't even look at it when I go to the store.

Life After Stroke And Embracing The New Version Of You

Bill Gasiamis 34:26

You're a different man now, Polo.

Polo Gomez 34:28

Oh yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 34:30

You like the new Polo like you must? It sounds like you're really proud of yourself.

Polo Gomez 34:35

I feel safer, if that makes any sense. You know, I was a like, I said I was a little wild. I was the type of guy that I never, I never looked for problems. It seems like the problems found me, I was the type of guy that I couldn't stand. Anybody get bullied. So somebody was getting bullied, I'd jump. I didn't care if I didn't know the person, I would jump in and be like 'Hey man, don't mess with this person. And next thing you know, I'm I get caught up in fights.

Polo Gomez 35:06

And now I just think about it different. I don't if I could gain movement in my left arm, because I was real nasty with my left arm, I can throw a punch, and I feel like, now, if I can get mobility in my left arm, that's the last thing I would use it for. I just want to get right. First of all, my main priority, is to get right so I can do for my family like they did for me.

Polo Gomez 35:41

You know what I mean? So I can be there, be able to be there for them, how they work for me, and another thing I want to do is go back and just talk to people about strokes, you know, because if they were like me, that they don't, they didn't know nothing about it, It's kind of hard, you know it's, I couldn't stand when people would tell me 'Hey, man, it's going to be okay. I'm like, How do you know you're not going through this? You know, you don't know what is, but now, you know, I understand they're they're just coming to you with the good intentions.

Polo Gomez 36:12

You know they're not. But no, I just, like, I said, I'm just trying to. I'm just trying to be a all around, just be a better person. Be a better person with myself, with my co workers at work, and like I said about my number one priority is to get better so I can be there for the ones that were there for me at all times, you know?

Bill Gasiamis 36:38

Yeah, that's a pretty good thing to achieve, man, to focus, to go after. So what's interesting is, you have all this awareness about your previous habits, the way that you used to interact with people. You have that awareness now, before you were unwell, did it ever occur to you that maybe I need to settle down, take things easier, make a few changes. When you were quote, unquote, well, and your body was working, did you ever kind of reflect on your behavior and think and maybe I should change this?

Polo Gomez 37:12

I never thought of anything. I never thought anything like this could happen, you know, like, and it's like I said at first I was mad at the world, I'm like, Why? Why me? But I'm like, why not me? You know, who am I? How am I any different than you or than anybody else? You know? It's just sometimes I think it's things you gotta go through in order for you to open your eyes and be like 'Hey guy, you're messing up.

Polo Gomez 37:39

And it's, it kind of, it kind of sucks that it had to get to this extent, you know. But hey, at least they got another chance. What if I wouldn't have been here, you know? Then there would have been no coming back. So, I mean, it's a tough situation. You just gotta learn how to deal with it, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 37:58

Yeah if you didn't make it, you wouldn't had that opportunity to make things right.

Polo Gomez 38:05

Exactly, and that's my goal, is to make things right.

Bill Gasiamis 38:14

That's a good goal. So now what are you hoping to achieve in the next 12 months? Like, I know you want to get some movement back and all that kind of stuff, but you said you wanted to support people, talk about stroke, raise awareness. Like,

what are you thinking about? Have you got any long term goals? Are you thinking about something 12 months out from now?

Polo Gomez 38:42

No, I have not really my main goal right now is to be able to get back to work, but like, you know, I feel like one thing that helped me a lot was, like, I said, I never knew anybody that had a stroke, that suffered a stroke, especially at a young age, and I felt like I was alone, and then I started looking into, like, on tiktoks and stuff like that. And I started looking in like videos and stuff like that, and I'm and I met some people that were my age that went through the same thing, and I reached out to him, and I spoke to him, and I'm not going to lie it, it felt different.

Polo Gomez 39:14

It felt good to be able to talk to somebody that can relate, you know, your age the same thing, that can relate to what you're going through. So, I mean, I don't know what what I plan on doing, but I do want to plan on doing something like that, so people know that they're not alone, sometimes you just need somebody to talk to, and it does take a lot of weight off of your shoulders, and I can't remember them, the gentleman's name right off the top of his off of my head, but, you know.

Polo Gomez 39:38

It was cool that he reached back out to me when I when I messaged him, he read my message and reached back out, you know, not, not a lot of people do that, but he reached back out, and we conversated for a little bit, and he gave me a couple of, you know, a couple of ideas to do, you know, things to do, or whatever. So I would like to organize something like that, just so people know that they're not alone, you can reach out to anybody and and somebody can.

Polo Gomez 40:04

Because when I was in that therapy place, a young lady there told me said 'You know what you need, you need to talk somebody around your age, you know, that's been through this. And then she asked another co workers, like, Who can we bring to him so he can talk? And he's like, Well, nobody, he's the youngest one in here. So, you know it's kind of scary in the way, because you feel like you're, you're in here alone.

Bill Gasiamis 40:25

And it's a small town, so there wouldn't be a lot of people there that, yeah, have

been through what you've been through. So all the other people around you, a lot older, maybe, what are they in their 60s and 70s? You can't relate to that, that's really hard, that's usually what we think of when we think about stroke, we always think about older people.

Bill Gasiamis 40:45

And now, you're 37 and when I was going through that, I was in a ward, and all the people around me were all elderly, you know, and they were really suffering from their strokes, and they were frail, and I couldn't cope with it like I didn't understand what is this, you know, what? What has happened to me? You know, how? How am I in the same place with these guys? It doesn't make sense. I've never known anybody who's 30 years old or 37 years old that's had a stroke, and that's my issue as well.

Being Part Of A Stroke Community

Bill Gasiamis 41:17

And I really reached out and tried to find a lot of people, local community, online, wherever I could. Being in the city, it was a bit easier because there was a lot more younger people that I found through the Stroke Foundation that was my age that had a stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 41:31

So I was also in need of that, and it sounds like a lot of people are in need of that, and that's what this podcast does, It allows people like you and me to connect and share stories and understand each other and share our concerns, our frustrations, our fears, and get it off and just get it off our shoulders and just put it into.

Polo Gomez 41:52

You know what I thought about? I thought about that, about building some kind of making, some kind of podcast, or some kind of videos and interview like my friends, you know, because to me, I think I was very, very blessed to have the friends that I have, because they never, not because of my situation, they exclude me from anything.

Polo Gomez 42:13

They're always there to invite me, to pick me up, you know, hold me up, like, if nothing was wrong with me, you know what I mean. And I know it's not easy, like

when I tell my girlfriend, she always invites me somewhere 'Hey, let's go here. Let's go there, you know, let's go to football games. And I'm like, No, you know, because I don't feel like you should be the one pushing me in a wheelchair.

Polo Gomez 42:32

You know, it's, it's not your job. But you know, they didn't take no for an answer, and they're always been there for me, and they don't mind pushing me in a wheelchair. It's good to raise some kind of awareness like that, we're like 'Hey man, if you got somebody that's, you know, close to you, be there for them, you know, because you don't know, you know. And I'm talking from both sides, because I'm the person that needed the support, and I have the people that gave me the support.

Bill Gasiamis 43:02

You feel like, you feel like it'd be good to pay it back.

Polo Gomez 43:07

I mean, I just want to be right, in case somebody needs something, I'm there to I'm there for them as well, and they were there for me.

Bill Gasiamis 43:16

So did it make you? Did this thing make you kind of aware of your mortality that 'Hey, I'm here for a short time of life.

Polo Gomez 43:28

Yeah, but you know what? It's crazy. It's crazy that you say that, because I used to tell my girlfriend all the time. I said 'Hey man, I got a feeling something's going to happen to me soon. Like, I don't think I'm going to be here for this for for much longer. Like, I always had a feeling. I don't know why, and it's probably because of the way I was living. You know what I mean? Both physically and just in the everyday life.

Bill Gasiamis 43:54

Do you feel like that shifted now? Do you now not have that same feeling?

Polo Gomez 44:00

Well, I mean, even though it's in the back of my head that this could happen again, but for the most part, like I said, I try to stay positive and think positive, and try to better myself so I can physically, internally and mentally better myself,

not just for a couple of months 'Okay, now I'm good. I'm ready to go again, back to my old ways. That's not the plan, but like I said, I'm always been a type of, a type of person that I'm like 'Man, I live my life.

Polo Gomez 44:31

I don't like to I don't hold no regrets, because I and especially now, you know, when somebody asked me, Hey man, you think I should do this? 'Hey buddy, if that's what you want to do and that's what you feel, right? It is do it, because Tomorrow is not promised, or if it is, you don't know if you're going to be in the same shape you are today, I said 'Look at me when I got my stroke that weekend.

Polo Gomez 44:54

I'm a type of guy that likes to, you know, go to Spanish concerts, and I like to dance. So I flew down from Pensacola to South Florida for a dance. I took my girlfriend, went to go dance that weekend. I flew back on Sunday, and I got my stroke on Monday. It's crazy, one minute you can be dancing, the next day, you can't even walk 'Oh yeah, like I said, it makes you look at life a whole different.

Bill Gasiamis 45:25

That's a 180 degree turn there, mate. That's ridiculous, like flying, traveling, partying, dancing, enjoying yourself, wake up the next couple of days later in hospital, can't move, can't do anything.

Polo Gomez 45:39

And everything. It's scary because this, this past year, my sister moved to Texas, so for New Year's, we went to spend the night the New Year's with my sister in Texas, and I remember when the, when the New Years came, hit. I told my parents, I said, Hey, that's what I said 'Hey, Dad, hey mom, hey. I told my brother. I said 'Hey, man, this is going to be my year, this is my year.

Polo Gomez 46:04

I said, I'm going to, I'm going to make some big moves this year. And then couple days later, I felt like I was in the top, because I was doing real good with my job and everything I was on, I was on top, and then next thing you know, I was pretty much crawling on the ground. So, like I said, it's a real big eye opener.

Bill Gasiamis 46:24

Yeah, you're making moves, but in a different way, and it's does still seem like you're making big moves, you're making big changes, you're learning from the

things that weren't working for you. You you've achieved great things, you're walking around the block now, you've put your shoe on for the first time. Like, they are big things, man, they just they look different, and they're not the kind of big things that you probably thought you were going to do.

Polo Gomez 46:47

Yeah. So, like, I said it was a big setback, but then again, it was a big reset as well.

Bill Gasiamis 46:57

A reset so you see it as a reset, like there was something that needed to a switch that needed to turn off and one that needed to be switched on.

Polo Gomez 47:05

Yep, yeah, because I feel like we're like, we're computers as well. We're like computers, there's times where we're going to shut down and reboot, refresh everything, and I think that's what I needed. So, yeah, well, that's how I see it now.

Bill Gasiamis 47:19

Yeah, were you spiritual, religious at all before that? Has that changed? Do you see things differently in that kind of space?

Polo Gomez 47:31

Yes, I've always been, I was raised in a Catholic family, but, so yeah, that's what I'm saying, whenever they tell me 'Hey, I don't think you're going to be able to move your arm again. I'm like 'Wait a minute, man, who are you to tell me I can't move my arm? And it just, that's what keeps me going and I pray every day, because, like I said, it's I think praying is one thing that's that keeps you, prayers are very powerful, and it's just one thing that keeps you, it takes a lot of stress off of me, I think.

Bill Gasiamis 48:12

It's a good thing your identity. You know, you described yourself before the stroke. You've described a shift in your identity, but deep down, do you feel the same? Are you different? I know you're different in your behavior, and some of the things that you stop doing, you stop drinking, you stop you know, mistreating.

Keeping The Positivity In Life After Stroke

Polo Gomez 48:33

No, a lot of people tell me, because, like, I said, I like to play around a lot, I like being a goofball, and a lot of people told me, like 'Hey, man, at least you haven't lost that yet. Because, and I don't plan on too, because sometimes everything does get a little bit overwhelming, so you take it out on other people, and it's like 'I stop and think about, I'm like, man, it's not their fault. You know what? I mean, but no, I like to keep a positive mind, I like to laugh, I like to make people laugh.

Polo Gomez 49:01

It's just, and I that's one thing I don't want to get rid of, or I don't want to change, because I think when if I talk to you and I make you laugh, it's a good vibe, you're going to be positive about things. If I'm sitting there and I'm being an a hole and just treating you bad, you're going to get bad eyes off of me, you're going to have a bad day. I'm a firm believer in that on and mentality. If you wake up in a bad with a bad attitude, you're going to have a bad day. You know what I mean?

Bill Gasiamis 49:32

Yeah. So your personality is still intact. You still go about things the way you always did, you've just made a couple of changes, important changes, stopped smoking, stopped drinking, lost a little bit of weight, paying attention to different things that you weren't paying attention to before being more grateful, sounds like you have a heaps of gratitude for things.

Polo Gomez 49:54

Exactly, I'm very grateful for, like I said, my friends, my girlfriend, and I'm very thankful for the first responders that got there, and because they're the ones that saved my life, I am very thankful for the doctors, God bless in their hands, for them to save my life, pretty much, and I'm also very thankful for the for the young lady that reacted fast at work.

Polo Gomez 50:23

Because if not, you know, somebody panics, you're not going to, you're just causing more damage if you're wasting time, and she reacted quick, so that's another person I'm very thankful for, you know, because if it wasn't because of her being brave and not panicking, things put a her pride could've got worse. You know what I mean?

Bill Gasiamis 50:41

Lot of things went your way, definitely, helicopter ride, everything kind of went your way, to get you to the hospital as quickly as possible, and deal with this thing pretty quickly. Do you recall how much time had elapsed between? I think I've got a droopy face to I'm actually in the hospital. Do you know how long it took?

Polo Gomez 51:02

It had been a good almost 2 hours, probably, or an hour 45 minutes to 2 hours. Because when I got that, I still went into that office by the time they she called 911, and they got there, and I mean, it sounds like a long time, but I think it was pretty quick, consider the circumstances I was in, you know what I mean, being on a job site, out in the middle of nowhere, so I think it was pretty quick.

Bill Gasiamis 51:29

Yeah, man, I thought it's to be grateful for. I mean, I've said it before. I know people go through difficult times after stroke, very different versions of stroke, everyone has a stroke on a different spectrum, and the recovery is on a different spectrum, like, I totally get it, but there's never been, there's never been a more, from a medical perspective.

Bill Gasiamis 51:51

A better time to become unwell, because there's so much they can do to help people, and so many people have been helped where you and I say 40 years ago, 50 years ago, you know, maybe it's a different outcome, you know.

Polo Gomez 52:07

Yeah, but now I see people, I hear people say, or like, my brother will say 'Oh, man, I don't feel like going to work tomorrow. I'm like 'Hey, man, enjoy it, because look at me, I wish I could go to work tomorrow, it's just don't take the least thing for granted.

Polo Gomez 52:31

Enjoy that you can walk, enjoy that you can work, provide, because it can be gone from one minute to another. So, I mean, there's a lot of things to be grateful for, and there's a lot of things to keep fighting for. You know what I mean?

Bill Gasiamis 52:47

Yeah, what was the hardest thing about stroke for you Polo?

Polo Gomez 52:53

Staying positive, not letting not letting it get me down.

Bill Gasiamis 52:59

That was the hardest part?

Polo Gomez 53:01

Yeah, that's definitely the hardest part, because, like I said, I don't know nobody my age that has gone through this to where you can relate, or you can be like 'Oh no, it's going to be okay, you know, that guy made it. You know, there's nothing like that. It's the same positive, you know, people would like said, I didn't like to go out at first, because people would see you like that, I don't want nobody seeing me like this.

Polo Gomez 53:22

I look at that, that guy, look he used to be this, this and that, and look at him now, you know, I just it was hard to stay positive, and then people will tell you 'Hey, man, it's going to be okay. don't worry about but I'm like 'How do you know, you know you don't know what I'm going through.

Polo Gomez 53:36

But, like I said, they're just coming to you, trying to come to you at a in a right, in a positive way, they don't mean to, and but, yeah, I think that's the most the hardest part is just to stay positive, not let it get you down, because if you let it get you down, you're only hurting yourself really.

Bill Gasiamis 53:58

Yeah, it could be hard to get out of that situation, I do these podcasts and all these interviews, and at the beginning, especially when I first started, was to practice positivity and to try and share positive stories with people on the other side of the screen, because I also struggled to find, you know, to have those days where, where I got out of the negative cycle, you know, you haven't gone to work for X amount of months.

Bill Gasiamis 54:26

You know, driving at the beginning, you know, people are picking you up, you've lost your independence, and it's hard to stay positive, man, it's really hard, and I used to try and have conversations about positive things so that I could forget about the negative stuff for a little bit while, and try and put the favor in the

positive and in the gratitude part of it.

Polo Gomez 54:46

Yeah, no, like at first I couldn't use I was like 'Man, I got people wiping my butt, you know, that's not cool. Grown man, wipe my dad, grown man, wiping my butt. Like, man, this ain't cool, you know. But then I'll, then I look at a different point of view, I'm like, man, well, I'm grateful that I have somebody to clean my butt and not, you know, be sitting there, you know, with pieces all over me. You know, it's just but now that I can do it on my own, it's a big deal for me.

Bill Gasiamis 55:18

Big deal, It's a huge deal, and it's also a big deal that somebody did that for you, isn't it amazing that somebody actually did that for you after 38 years, you know, they're wiping your butt again.

Polo Gomez 55:30

Yeah, my brother, is younger than me, and he would bathe me, and I'm, you know, at first, I was like 'Man, this ain't cool. But I was grateful to have them, to have that support and not leave me there for a couple days.

Lessons From The Stroke

Bill Gasiamis 55:49

That's love, that's real support there, man, that's like, unbelievable, that's the best, I love it. What you've mentioned a few things already, but what has stroke taught you?

Polo Gomez 56:07

What do you mean?

Bill Gasiamis 56:08

Like what lessons have come out of stroke for you? I know you've already had a discussion where you've mentioned a few things, but like, what's the one big takeaway from this whole experience? You know the one big lesson.

Polo Gomez 56:22

And like I said, to me knowledge to take care of myself, your health is should be your number one priority, don't wait to go get a checkup, don't, because you feel fine doesn't mean you're fine internally, go get checked out, now if I get a little

headache or something, or if I feel something abnormal, I reach out to my doctor right away.

Polo Gomez 56:51

Hey, I got this going on, you know, I just don't want, I don't wait for nothing anymore, and I don't plan on it anymore. It, you know, it's just, that's something I used to do. I have a little headache. I'm like 'Ah, it'll go away. I'll pop some advil and that's it, never thought my blood pressure was probably booming, you know?

Bill Gasiamis 57:10

Yeah, so there's people like you and I listening to this now, kind of going through their own version of stroke and the recovery and all the challenges. What's a little bit of wisdom you'd like to impart on them, or what do you want to tell them? What should they know about their experience?

Polo Gomez 57:30

Well, see another thing that happened with me is that was prior, a couple days prior to my stroke, I have a cousin that has the same age, he had a mini stroke, and after that, he's like 'Oh man, I'm done drinking, because we always, we all were our partners in crime I'm going to stop drinking. And it was crazy, I'm like 'Oh man, come on, stop being a little wuss, you know. I didn't, we didn't think it was nothing crazy.

Polo Gomez 57:55

And then days later, I get mine, which one was a little bit more aggressive, but it's just, I think the main thing, like, I tell my brother now I'm like 'Hey, man, just take care of yourself, bud, don't, leave them Red Bulls behind, because I'm telling you, Red Bulls don't work, they're just, it's just a bad habit, it's like a cigarette, it's just a bad habit, you pick up and they're not good for you.

Polo Gomez 58:20

I don't even know why these people sell them, but my brother, he quit drinking Red Bulls one time we went to Texas and he picked one up because he was tired of the day. Don't drink that, and he left it there, so he don't drink Red Bulls no more, nobody does no more, really. Everybody's around me is pretty much watching their watching taking care of more of their health now.

Bill Gasiamis 58:46

That's a good outcome.

Polo Gomez 58:48

Yeah, everybody's pretty much feeding off of it.

Bill Gasiamis 58:54

All I meant, I really appreciate you reaching out and connecting with me and also being on the podcast man, I love your attitude. I think your recovery is going to continue and you're going to go far, and thanks for your time, and I just really enjoyed our conversation.

Polo Gomez 59:09

I appreciate the opportunity to appreciate the space on here.

Bill Gasiamis 59:14

Thanks for being on the podcast.

Polo Gomez 59:16

Yes, sir. I appreciate you.

Bill Gasiamis 59:19

Well. That wraps up another episode of the recovery after stroke podcast. I hope you found Polo's story inspiring, as I did, from dealing with the sudden onset of hemorrhagic stroke to regaining his mobility and tackling the physical and emotional challenges of recovery, Polo's resilience and determination are truly remarkable. If Polo's story resonated with you, or if you have someone in your life who's going through recovery, please share this episode with them, it could encourage them further.

Bill Gasiamis 59:52

A big thank you to everyone who has taken the time to leave a review on iTunes and Spotify this is very much appreciated. It is really important as it helps the podcast be found by other stroke survivors who are looking for this type of content. Your feedback not only helps others find the show, but it also provides a boost to stroke survivors who are looking for hope and practical advice.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:17

If you haven't already, please consider leaving a five-star review or subscribing on YouTube, where you can like comment and stay updated on new episodes. If you'd like to support the podcast further, head over to patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke, your contribution helps the show run and ensures we can continue bringing these

important stories to stroke survivors around the world.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:43

Finally, if you have a product or service related to stroke recovery or would like to share your story on the show, I'd love to hear from you, simply visit recoveryafterstroke.com/contact, and get in touch. Thanks for joining me today, and I'll see you on the next episode.

Intro 1:01:01

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Intro 1:01:30

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Intro 1:01:55

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Intro 1:02:20

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