

Losing Confidence After Stroke - Jaemin Frazer

Losing Confidence After Stroke: Why It Happens and How to Get It Back

Jaemin Frazer has spent nearly two decades and around 16,000 coaching hours on a single question: what is actually going on when a capable person stops trusting themselves? He founded The Insecurity Project to work on it directly. He is not a stroke survivor - and that turns out to be the reason this conversation is useful, because he arrives without any assumptions about what stroke recovery is supposed to look like.

What he does have is a precise account of what happens to a person when their ordered world collapses, which is, more or less, the definition of a stroke.

“I Just Want to Be Who I Was”

Almost every survivor says some version of this. Six weeks out, six years out - the sentence barely changes.

Jaemin's response is to ask what is actually being requested. His answer: not the past. Certainty.

They're looking for certainty. They're looking for comfort. They're looking for safety. They're looking through rose coloured glasses in many ways, because no one's life was perfect before anything.

That last part is the uncomfortable bit. The life you want back had its own problems. What memory offers is not a better life but a known one - and the nervous system will take known over good almost every time.

Certainty Is the Real Request

Humans need certainty the way they need food and shelter. We don't function in chaos. But we also can't get certainty from the outside world, because the outside world doesn't have any to give. It never did. The stroke didn't remove your certainty; it removed your ability to keep believing in it.

Which leaves one option. As Jaemin puts it:

The most resourceful form of certainty is to embrace uncertainty and back yourself.

That distinction - external certainty versus internal certainty - is the whole conversation. When your sense of safety lives outside you, you have to control your circumstances to feel all right, and after a stroke your circumstances are largely uncontrollable. When it lives inside you, circumstances can do what they like. This is the same territory covered in stroke recovery mindset (<https://recoveryafterstroke.com/stroke-recovery-mindset/>), approached from a completely different angle.

Self-Doubt Is Useful. Insecurity Is Not.

Jaemin draws a hard line between the two, and it's worth holding onto.

Self-doubt is accurate information about a skill gap. If you can't yet climb the stairs unaided, self-doubt is what stops you attempting it alone. It says nothing about your worth. It's wisdom.

Insecurity is different. Insecurity is the belief that a failure would expose something defective about you. Jaemin argues that most people misdefine it - it isn't fear of judgement, failure, or rejection. It's one level deeper:

No one's actually afraid of being rejected. They're afraid of: if I put my best foot forward and it's not enough, and then people don't accept me - what does that confirm about my own inadequacy?

The threat isn't out there. It's a verdict you've already passed on yourself, waiting for the world to co-sign it.

What Insecurity Costs Your Recovery

This is where it stops being philosophy.

Jaemin frames insecurity as a resource problem. Proving yourself, defending yourself, covering and compensating – all of it consumes energy. When life is going well there's enough spare capacity that you never notice the drain.

After a stroke, there is no spare capacity.

A stroke puts you into survival mode, and now you've got no resources to survive, because all your best resources are directed elsewhere to make sure no one sees your inadequacy.

Survivors already know that fatigue after stroke is not ordinary tiredness. An injured brain rewiring itself is metabolically expensive. Every unit of energy spent managing how you appear to other people is a unit unavailable for healing. Attending to the emotional side of recovery isn't separate from the physical work – it's what frees up the capacity to do it. That connection runs through emotional recovery after stroke (<https://recoveryafterstroke.com/emotional-recovery-after-stroke-dr-bradley-nelson/>) as well.

Why Your Friends Push Back

Many survivors have to change how they live – what they eat, what they drink, where they go, who they spend time with. And many report losing friends over it.

Jaemin's framing here is bracing. Resistance from the people around you isn't a malfunction. In any story worth telling, the character who transforms does so by overcoming obstacles, and those obstacles almost always arrive in the form of other people. Remove the resistance and nothing in the hero is enlarged.

So when someone says you've changed and doesn't mean it kindly, they are – without intending to – handing you the exact thing you need to become someone who no longer requires their approval.

Grief and Insecurity Are Not the Same Thing

This distinction matters, and conflating them causes real harm.

Losing the use of a limb is a genuine loss. Grief is the appropriate response, and it deserves acknowledgement rather than management.

The damage begins when the loss becomes a statement about your worth. I can't run, therefore I'm not a runner, therefore who am I? That is no longer grief – that's insecurity wearing grief's clothes, and it needs a different response entirely. Survivors working through that identity question will recognise it in [craniotomy stroke recovery and identity reset](https://recoveryafterstroke.com/craniotomy-stroke-recovery-identity-reset/) (<https://recoveryafterstroke.com/craniotomy-stroke-recovery-identity-reset/>), and it sits close to the ground covered in [anxiety after stroke](https://recoveryafterstroke.com/anxiety-after-stroke/) (<https://recoveryafterstroke.com/anxiety-after-stroke/>).

That's Not the Tragedy. That's the Setup.

The line Jaemin returns to twice in the episode is this: being lost and confused doesn't disqualify you from a meaningful life. It's what qualifies you to begin one.

Nobody reaches adulthood with an accurate picture of who they are. Everyone arrives confused. The confusion isn't damage to be repaired before you can start – it's the starting position. This reframes the disorientation of early recovery as the opening move rather than evidence that something has gone permanently wrong. The same reframe underpins post-traumatic growth in stroke recovery (<https://recoveryafterstroke.com/post-traumatic-growth-stroke-recovery/>).

And Jaemin is firm that this is solvable – not managed, not coped with. Solvable. Because the inadequacy you've been protecting everyone from isn't real. It's a conclusion you drew as a child and have been gathering evidence for ever since.

There is no monster under the bed. Only the idea of one.

Where to Start

Start by being precise. When you catch yourself saying I lost my confidence, ask what you actually mean. Confidence at what? In front of whom? What exactly are you afraid would be revealed?

Abstract language hides the levers. Precise language shows you where they are.

Closing Links

If this episode is useful to you, Bill's book *The Unexpected Way That A Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened* covers ten tools for recovery and personal transformation - you can find it at <https://recoveryafterstroke.com/book>.

If you would like one-on-one support with your own recovery, you can apply at <https://recoveryafterstroke.com/momentum>.

If this show has helped you, you can support it at <https://patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke>.

Footer Disclaimer

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

Losing Confidence After Stroke - Jaemin Frazer (Interview)

You don't need your old life back. You need to trust yourself again - and Jaemin Frazer explains exactly why that feels impossible after stroke.

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Transcript:

Introduction - Losing Confidence After Stroke



Jaemin (00:00)

A stroke puts you into survival mode, and now you've got no resources to survive because all your best resources are directed elsewhere

So then it costs you everything. It costs you your future. It costs you your ability to heal, to make sense of this, to come out the other side and reinvent or do whatever you need to be present for yourself.

It's a slow descent into madness really, if all your best resources are proving and defending, covering and compensating, then you stop being human, you stop being alive, you stop being present, you become hypervigilant around what others are thinking, and your world keeps getting smaller.

Bill Gasciamis (00:35)

Welcome back to Recovery After Stroke. I'm Bill Gasciamas.

Before anything else, thank you to everyone supporting the show on Patreon, becoming a YouTube member, and to everyone supporting it in all other ways. Sharing episodes, leaving reviews, sending them to someone who needs them, buying the book. This show has reached over a million and a half downloads because of people doing exactly that. And I don't take it for granted.

If you've ever caught yourself saying, I just want to be who I was, this episode is going to sit with you for a while. My guest today is Jaemin Fraser. Jaemin is a coach, the founder of the Insecurity Project, a TEDx speaker, and as of this year, a novelist. He spent nearly two decades, around 16,000 coaching hours, on one problem. What happens to a person when they stop trusting themselves and what it costs them? Jaemin has

not had a stroke. I want to be upfront about that because it's the reason this conversation goes where it does.

He came to it without any assumptions about what recovery is meant to look like. And what he brought instead is a very precise account of what happens to anyone

whose ordered world falls apart overnight. We get into why wanting your old life back is really a request for certainty. The difference between self-doubt, which is useful, and insecurity, which isn't, why insecurity draws down the exact energy your brain needs to heal.

What's really going on when friends push back on your habits and why being lost and confused isn't the tragedy, it's the setup.

Three quick things before we start, my book, *The Unexpected Way That a Stroke Became the Best Thing That Happened*, covers ten tools for recovery and personal transformation. It's available at recoveryafterstroke.com/book.

If you'd like one-on-one support with your own recovery, I work with a small number of stroke survivors at a time. Structure, accountability, and genuine guidance from someone who's been through it, you can apply at recoveryafterstroke.com/momentum. And if this show has helped you and you want to help me get to a thousand episodes, you can support it either as a YouTube member or by going to patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke. I want to make sure that

No stroke survivor has to ever go through what I went through when I first started my recovery, and that was not having any information about how to proceed after I got sent home from hospital. Now it's time for the interview.

Bill Gasiamis (03:14)

Jaemin Fraser, welcome to the podcast.

Jaemin (03:15)

Thanks for having me, Bill.

Bill Gasiamis (03:17)

Absolute pleasure, mate. I wanted to ask, actually I want to start with the person listening. They're anywhere from six weeks to twenty years post stroke, right? and what they say is they want to be back to their old life. In your experience, when someone says, I just want to be who I was, what are they actually asking for?

Jaemin (03:39)

Hmm, well, I think they're looking for certainty. They're looking for comfort.

They're looking for safety.

Yeah, they're looking through rose colored glasses in many ways because no one's life was perfect before anything. So the fantasy of if I could go back to where I was, it deletes a whole bunch of stuff around the reality of where you were in the first place. But I think that the desire is it's certainty, safety, peace, comfort. That's what a person is driven to find some way or other.

Bill Gasiamis (04:16)

W what do you think it is about certainty? A and what does that even mean? Like I

There was, you know, before my experience with stroke, there wasn't anything that was certain. Is it an illusion? Is certainty an illusion? Because I definitely don't feel certain about anything going forward either. but kind of not in a bad way. Like I don't have a bad relationship with the lack of certainty. It's just.

It i it's just not real. Like I feel like it might be an illusion.

Jaemin (04:53)

Well, I love Anthony Robbins take on this. I think his six core needs model is his finest contribution to the personal development space and his earliest versions of this, because I think if you were to do a search, Tony Robbins six core needs, what you're going to get today is an idea that there's a hierarchy of needs. So you could do a test to work out which needs are most important for you based on your personality type.

That's not how we first introduced them. And I am convinced it's not actually how it works. So just a quick summary. He says, doesn't matter what age, what sex, what culture, what stage of life, because you're human, just as important as food, shelter, clothing is the need for certainty. Firstly, we are creatures who do not survive in chaos. We need some sense of control, order. We thrive in the familiar. We need a sense of what's happening next.

So we organize ourselves and we find certainty. We cannot survive without it. Interestingly though, we also need uncertainty. these six needs operate in paradox. Piers, are you familiar with the six core needs?

Bill Gasiamis (06:07)

I'm not actually.

Jaemin (06:08)

and variety is the first two and they operate in paradox pairs. So certainty pulls you one way, but we also need variety. If you have 100 % certainty, you're completely bored and

Bill Gasiamis (06:18)

Uh-huh.

Jaemin (06:19)

you would ruin things. You'd mess it up so that there would be something to do. So we need uncertainty, surprise, spontaneity, adventure. But if you have 100

Bill Gasiamis (06:30)

You'd mess it up i

is is is messing it up because you need uncertainty, is that that sounds like like self sabotage.

Jaemin (06:41)

Well, it is if it's unresourceful. is if you haven't, I mean, the aim of the game is to find high quality internal resource, ways to meet these needs. If you don't find that, then unconsciously, you'll still find a way to meet these needs and it will be through sabotage, dysfunction, know. So certainty and variety are the first two. The second two are significance and love. So all humans need a sense of significance, need to know, I matter?

Am I more than just a name and number? Do I have value? Is there any point to me? Now that's a journey away from the tribe because we're also relational beings. So we don't survive in isolation. We need love, belonging, connection, warmth, touch. So if you have 100 % love and connection, you lose your separateness. And if you have 100 % significance, then you're completely lonely and isolated. But we do need both.

Embracing Uncertainty and Personal Resourcefulness

So certainty, variety, significance, love, and then the final two are contribution and growth. So humans do feel the need to make a difference, add value, give back, leave a legacy, solve problems. So contribution is about adding value to

others. And then growth is adding value to yourselves, to ourselves. Every living thing grows, you either grow or die. So this is the need that drives us to do more, to have more, to see more, to expand our experience.

one way shape or another. it's a strange thing to need certainty back to certainty. It's a strange thing to need certainty for survival in an uncertain world because you then can't help but cling to things that aren't really certain and try and control them. Cling to a job you don't like, cling to a memory that feels familiar, cling to a relationship that's dysfunctional.

cling to stuff that you know, because it makes you feel certain and makes you feel safe. There's a predictability around it. What you're describing is not that you've done away with the need for certainty. It's

that you have a certainty in your ability to handle the real world. So you don't need to cling to things being a certain way. You don't need to force things to be back the way they were. You're like, that's ridiculous. Here I am now and I'm certain.

that I am a resourceful person, a creative person, a good person, a clever person, I'll work it out. The real world will happen to me. I'll wake up, I'll open my eyes and I'll handle it. That's what I'm certain about. So the most resourceful form of certainty is to embrace uncertainty and back yourself.

Bill Gasiamis (09:26)

To be certain about uncertainty.

Jaemin (09:28)

There be certain uncertainty. That is the only certainty. It's, you there's you think, what is certain? well, the sun's going to come up tomorrow. For some people, it's not. Some people, this will be the last sunrise they ever see. No one's expecting that, but it happens. So we're not entitled to any more time, any more opportunity. That's not certain. It's not guaranteed. So yeah, the only certainty is it's all uncertain. So then you must find certainty within, and that will require you to examine your own.

your your capability, your own resourcefulness and to grow up and mature in your own sense of who you really are.

Bill Gasiamis (10:06)

Yeah.

I have this saying that I picked up from somewhere. Some dude in the Middle East, like I think in the 40s or 50s, said this thing. I forget his name. I I always wanted to remember his name so I can give him credit, but it goes like exp expect the best, prepare for the worst. And it kind of feels like that's how I handled my uncertainty when, you know, the doctor turns up day one.

Of a bleed in the brain diagnosis and says, gives you the most vague version of the diagnosis and said to me, there's a shadow on your brain. It could be a cancer, it could be a sea it could be a tumor that's benign, it could be a bleed in the brain. Like, any questions? And I was like, Well.

Jaemin (10:57)

There's

a few.

Bill Gasiamis (11:01)

I don't know, at eleven PM on a Friday night. Maybe not. Let's talk in the morning. but it's like

And then after that came a lot of uncertainty. We didn't know what a family life was gonna be like. We didn't like know what my work life was gonna be like. We didn't know whether I'd be around. We didn't know any of the things that I kind of knew the day before, which I took for granted that I knew, which was only that w without knowing that there's something wrong in my head and that potentially I'm unwell, I knew that.

Tomorrow was going to be pretty much the same as yesterday. And there's going to be some movement in a couple of similar directions, maybe a few odd ones and different ones. And I suppose that expect the best prepare for the worst was me embracing uncertainty, the certainty of uncertainty. Does that saying kind of capture that spirit?

Jaemin (12:03)

It certainly does. However, the challenge is no surprise. I'm going to talk about insecurity being a challenge because then it comes back to them. But then what

do you believe about yourself? You know, do you feel like you're actually up for the challenge? Do you have the resourcefulness? What is the story you tell around your own capacity, your capability, your intelligence, your value? Because

to fear inadequacy then undermines your confidence in your own ability to handle the real world. And therefore you must then cling to external certainty and long for things to go back the way they were so that you can be safe. Because you don't trust yourself to be up for the challenge.

Bill Gasiamis (12:50)

Yeah. It's a real interesting conundrum because before I was unwell I didn't contemplate life, me and how I interact with life or the possibility of nail life. I didn't I didn't contemplate that whole relationship and then you're thrust in it and it seems like people that I've interviewed at least the four hundred odd stroke survivors that I've interviewed have

not got the resources backfilled in preparation for when that day comes, and then you feel inadequate, insecure, perhaps, whatever the word is, that you can even handle this. I've never met anyone who said, I know, I was 100% certain that I was going to handle this diagnosis from my doctors.

Can you prepare for the worst? Like that whole going back to that statement again, that saying, is there a way that we can even prepare for the worst when we don't even know what the worst is? Is it even is it sounds like it might be might be a futile pursuit?

Jaemin (14:07)

Whoa.

I I think you and I here today are doing that exact thing, you know, with internal resourcefulness. We don't know what tomorrow is bringing. So in some ways we are certain in our capacity to, you know, hope for the best, prepare for the worst. So that's not futile. I don't consider that futile at all. And I think that is the only job is to resource yourself for the real world, is to grow up, is to become mature.

The way that I think about that is self-sufficiency. You when you're young, you're growing through stages of development and really learning self-sufficiency. Can you feed yourself? Can you dress yourself? Can you learn yourself? Can you drive a car? Can you earn money? And they're all the things, physical, financial, self-

sufficiency, but people are...

seem, you know, it's see when it comes to emotional, intellectual, psychological self sufficiencies, like what is that? How does that even work? And so they come into their adult world, being able to earn money, being able to drive a car, out, address themselves, you know, wipe their own ass. Great. But when it comes to validating their own existence, when it comes to sourcing their own certainty, when it comes to deeply loving and accepting themselves, when it comes to being the one that approves of themselves, that sees themselves.

you know, adults are typically ill prepared for that, you know, stroke

Bill Gasiamis (15:38)

Mm-hmm.

Jaemin (15:38)

or no stroke. And so, you know, you know, we're talking about when a stroke happens, but people have all kinds of catastrophes they're not prepared for, you know, and things are fine because their ordered world is safe and predictable. And then next day it's not. And they look inside and they've never developed the resources, the internal resources of adulthood that helps them stand solid when the world is falling around apart.

about them. you know, primarily that is the work of the insecurity project. It's these conversations around existential angst, which people don't prepare for because their world's ordered. But when your world falls apart, then you really see how unprepared you are to handle difficulty and the worst case scenario if you have not examined your own sense of who you are.

Bill Gasiamis (16:29)

Mm-hmm.

The world being ordered, it can be ordered in a dysfunctional way as well, right?

Jaemin (16:39)

Well, that's, yes, that's exactly what happens because we need certainty. I love thinking about these six core needs as a vacuum. In our atmosphere, a vacuum is always filled. So someone says to me, I don't need that much certainty. You know, I'm more of a risk taker, I'm adventurous, or they might, someone else might be

the opposite. I need so much certainty, I'm very risk averse.

you know, someone looks at one of my clients recently looked at me and says, you're a free spirit. You're adventurous. It's different. It's different from me. You know, I'm very analytical. I'm risk averse. I'm safety conscious. But if you zoom out and have a look at both of us, I need just as much certainty as that person. Exactly. I can't survive without certainty. I can't survive without order. It's just that I've found a high quality, internal adult way to order my world so that I have internal safety.

which then frees me to go into the world and experience uncertainty and play. Whereas this other person has not found an internal way to create order. So they're clinging to all the dysfunctional external forms of order. Hate their

Bill Gasiamis (17:47)

Wow.

Jaemin (17:47)

job, relationships falling apart, don't like their relationship with money, know, problems here, difficulties there, but it's familiar. So I better cling to it because I know it. There you go, there's some certainty for you.

Bill Gasiamis (18:03)

I love what you said, like that internal sense of certainty

Jaemin (18:06)

Hmm

Bill Gasiamis (18:07)

seems to be the biggest skill lacking in many, many people. If you have internal sense of certainty, then you don't have to control the outside world. You put the dishwasher plate in the wrong direction. You know, when we loaded the dishwasher, y this might be revealing.

you park the car in the wrong bay, or you know, all these little things that people kind of cling to to make their world feel right if they see it like that. If everyone just did the task the way that they needed to do it, then I wouldn't have a problem, right? But if you have internal certainty and you can be more flexible, I think Tony Robbins talks about being having multiple ways to be to be.

being more flexible, then you realize that there are infinite number of ways that things can be loaded into a dishwasher, for example, even though there are certainly some ways that won't be able to wash the dishes effectively, perhaps, but there are many ways, and the other person's ways not necessarily the wrong way or the odd way or or the incorrect way, right?

Jaemin (19:30)

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis (19:31)

I think I resonate with that immediately, that internal sense of certainty. And then the external world becomes easier to navigate. Is that is that

Jaemin (19:44)

Well, does

because then play becomes possible and you don't need things to be anything other than they are, know, good, bad or indifferent. You have an experience that looks terrible. Well, are you sure it's terrible? Or could there be learning? Could there be a gift? Could there be an opportunity? Might you meet someone? Might your life change in an unexpected way? Like who's to say a bad experience is actually a bad experience if you're free to encounter it as it is.

The Role of Self-Doubt and Insecurity

That's what becomes possible if you have internal safety and that you do back yourself to handle that. And I think it's an abstract concept for most people because they've never faced their fear of their deep inadequacy. And so it's always undermined. They would love to take internal certainty, but their conviction, if they're really honest, and it's hard to be honest, because this stuff gets pretty well suppressed.

Their honest fear is that there is a problem with them. There is an inadequacy.

They are not up to the challenge. So if they rely on themselves, they will be found lacking and wanting. So therefore they must look outside themselves. That's their only option.

Bill Gasiamis (20:53)

Got it. You've worked with high performers for hundreds and maybe thousands of hours, right? if one of them walked into you into a meeting with you and said, I had a stroke and I lost my confidence, what what's the first thing you ask them?

Jaemin (21:15)

What do you mean? That would be the first thing that I asked them. I understand a little about a stroke. think I would understand enough about that part of the sentence, but I'm more curious around the second part of the sentence. I love Jordan Peterson's thinking in so many ways. And he says, listen, be precise in your speech because things that go unnamed become monsters that consume you. So that would be where I would start.

What do you mean I lost this happened and that made me do this? Are you sure? That's how it actually worked. What do you mean? Let's have a look. Let's have a look. So that's my whole world is someone comes to me with a level of abstraction. They use language that's abstract. And when you use abstract language, you cannot see any of the levers that can be pulled. And so you end up feeling hopeless and overwhelmed. When you be precise, when you have a look, you actually

begin to see the mechanics, the structures that are actually influencing your experience. And when you see them precisely, the levers become apparent, like, I could actually adjust that. I could turn this, I could change this. Therefore now I'm back in control of my own experience of my reality. So yeah, that's where I say, what do you mean? What are you talking about exactly?

Bill Gasiamis (22:37)

I love that. It's it reminds me of when I hear the word the one of the most common words I hear in my interview, stroke recovery, stroke conversations. And I I'm specifically talking about stroke because that's my niche, right? That's my audience, that's the podcast. But I know this is a situation kind of that I experience also broadly outside of my stroke podcast world. my children,

others that I come across is I hear the word depression and anxiety. And it's an umbrella word that people place on so many experiences and nobody ever even really knows if if I challenge if I have the permission and and I'm in a room with the right person to challenge them and ask them, well, do you do you know what the definition of depression is? And do you know what the definition of anxiety is?

Nobody can really give you that. And they've taken a word and they apply it to an experience that may have been completely separate from the intended definition of a word like depression and anxiety. And I I kind of feel like that's what you're saying. Like somebody says, I'm I'm depressed, like, okay, like, why? How? How do you know that?

Jaemin (24:00)

It's exactly anxiety is a great story because I go, well, hang on. How did you, how are you anxious? And anxiety requires a backstory to survive. So I'm curious, you know, are you anxious tying your shoes? No. how do you do not anxiety? Well, I don't know. No one cares. I can't fail. I've done it a million times. there you go. That's interesting. So the, the areas that you are not anxious about, there's no possibility of being found inadequate. Curious.

So the areas you are anxious, you're only anxious because there's something about the activity you're involved in, which you feel threatened, personally threatened that someone might see your flaw. So let's not worry about the anxiety, it's downstream. Tell me about this perceived flaw. Tell me about this thing that you think is wrong with you. Are you sure that's even there? The great humor of my work in the same as what you're saying, know, insecurity.

Talking about fear, my first question to people, what are you afraid of? And no one knows. People are experiencing fear. They can tell you that much. So what you're running and hiding, but what are you running and hiding from? yeah, it's just this, you know, I just feel so, like, okay, interesting. So you're running and hiding. What about if we go and have a look at what it is you're running and hiding from? You might be surprised. In fact,

You will be surprised. promise you it's not what you think it is. And you've just been running and hiding for so long. You've just become convinced that there's a thing here that you ought to keep running and hiding from. I'm not so sure.

Bill Gasiamis (25:41)

Yeah. That what are you afraid of? That's a very interesting question. Again, you know, I find myself in the hot seat here. And every time I ventured down something new, it was interesting now 'cause I'm reflecting like how often insecurity came up. You know, the first few episodes of the podcast were, my God, people are going to judge it, they're gonna say it's no good, you don't know how

to interview, all that kind of stuff.

And the the best thing to do was just put it out there. And if somebody did say that was handle it. And if somebody didn't say that, well then there was nothing to handle. So just do it anyway. And I remember then also with my book, I'm not an author. I did I'm not a scholar. I've never done any of that stuff. But I wrote my first book, *The Unexpected Way That a Stroke Became the Best Thing That Happened*. It's a pretty loaded title. And I knew it was gonna ruffle some feathers.

But I put it out there and the very first comment that I got from the very first post that I made was a negative one.

And what I realized was that pattern was similar in that when I started the podcast, I had the exact same concern that it might happen and it did. People did give me negative feedback.

But then it seems to me now now that I've learnt a few times, you know, what happens when you put yourself out there for the first time when you tell the world this is what I've created, you know, I'm sharing my creation is part of the journey has to be something that's gonna test your insecurity. It might not be a negative comment or so but it but it might be like bad sales or it might be nobody listens or whatever.

So it sounds like insecurity is necessary in some cases to kind of overcome, to tackle it, to overcome it, so that you can be better at tackling it and overcoming it and achieve more things. Do you know what I'm saying? Did I explain that correctly?

Jaemin (27:54)

Yeah,

I think I understand. I don't think I agree with you though.

Bill Gasiamis (27:58)

Okay.

Jaemin (27:59)

So here's how I'd think about it. I'd separate self-doubt and insecurity into slightly different categories.

Bill Gasiamis (28:07)

Okay, so

you picked up self doubt there.

Jaemin (28:10)

So, so self doubts are really important quality of wisdom. So for instance, I've got a mate who races super bikes, you know, say he got injured this weekend and he says, Jaemin, you know, there's still four rounds left. Can you sub in for me and race my super bike next week? And I'm like, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Now I've never raced a super bike before. I do have a motorbike license, but you know, if I didn't have severe self doubt, I'd be delusional.

I'd be a crazy person and I would be, you know, dangerous to myself and the world. So self doubt doesn't, doesn't tell me I'm a bad person. It just highlights the limit of the things I'm good at. So, so the real function of self doubt to me is more what you're describing. It's, it's the limit says, you're not actually very good at this. Now that doesn't say anything about your essence, your value and your worth. Would you like to be good at this? And I go.

Actually, no, great. Well, then don't do it. Don't do it because it'll go bad. I'm like, Yeah, I'd actually like to be good at it. excellent. Well, you have a massive skill gap. So go take however long to learn the skills and fill the skills so that you can come back with genuine confidence with earn confidence so that you could compete in this arena and do well. That's that's a wisdom conversation. Now insecurity is this personal piece. It's like, I'm gonna put myself out there.

people are gonna judge, laugh, critique, and then they'll see who I really am. They will see my flaws, my flaws, my inadequacies will now be exposed to the world. Now it's personal. And so to me, the definition of insecurity is really important here because people think insecurity is somehow related to the fear of what others think about them, the fear of being judged, the fear of failing, the fear of being rejected.

Bill Gasiamis (30:04)

Hmm.

Right.

Jaemin (30:05)

Really

imprecise. That's not that's not insecure at all. It's just one or two levels deeper than that. You know, say for instance, the fear of failure, which is a typical one. And no one's actually afraid of failing. They're afraid of the personal implications of failure. If I try my best at something, and then it doesn't work. Huh? What have I just revealed to the world about me the problem with me?

Same as rejection. No one's actually afraid of being rejected. They're afraid of, if I put my best foot forward and it's not enough, and then people don't accept me, huh, what does that reveal? What does that prove? What does that confirm about my own inadequacy? So then insecure.

Bill Gasiamis (30:47)

about what

I about what I think are my inadequacies. Because it's not about the other

Jaemin (30:50)

Exactly, that's insecurity. Insecurity is...

Bill Gasiamis (30:53)

person's thinking, it's me, what I think, and then they're confirming my inadequacy that I've

Jaemin (30:56)

confirming it. That's it. That's it.

Bill Gasiamis (30:58)

generated and created, which is not even real.

Jaemin (31:01)

That's exactly right. That's the thing, which is hilarious. But when you see that now the levers become apparent, because if the fear is out there, then you got to control the world constantly and obsess about it. But if the fear is here and you created it, then the levers are very apparent. You could then go examine this perceived inadequacy, trace it back to when you first described it and examine it at its roots. Like you could go on a structural engineering quest back into the

the substance of your own sense of you, the language you've used to describe yourself and check it, check it for integrity, check it for gaps, check it for misunderstandings. Like that's the fun of what I get to do. It's take what appears to be abstract, mysterious, messy, unknowable and treat it like a structural engineer just by examining the structure of language.

Bill Gasiamis (31:57)

People don't do that much, do they?

Jaemin (31:59)

No, no, no. And people are insecure about being insecure. So like when I launched the insecurity project, my business coach said, that's the worst thing I've ever heard. Like you've picked the most difficult, scary topic and put it at the front. No one's going to be putting their hands up saying, Jay, when I'm insecure, can you help me? Like it's existential angst. It's the human condition. We want to be good. We're just afraid that we're not. So we run and we hide and we cover and compensate. So yeah, it's a hard

topic to face and yet the great joke is there's no actual reason for it to be hard other than the confirmation bias we've given ourselves buying into our own bullshit, confirming our own fiction, exasperating our own misunderstanding. So there is no monster under the bed. It's just the idea of a monster that terrifies us.

Bill Gasiamis (32:55)

we influenced in that way by external sources or is that a human a human thing like that that we are kind of pre-programmed to do just because of that whole safety

issue because you know safety comes in in a variety of different things. You know, you have to be safe from people entering your home, you know, back in the day and harming you and your family and taking your belongings. If you're in a war torn area, you have to be safe from, you know, the invaders and that kind of stuff. But also this discussion that we're having seems to me, as you keep going into those little beautiful deep places, it seems to me that

Again, it's about us

creating like many barriers of safety around us and thinking that that's the perhaps not even thinking like in just instinctively creating this kind of like multi

layered safe structure that we can't be harmed in.

Jaemin (34:06)

brilliant way of describing it. And that is the instinct. We are hardwired for safety. You cannot like this idea, more courage, less fear, feel the fear and do it anyway. It's such a nonsense as though you could turn off your need for safety.

Bill Gasiamis (34:20)

Mm-hmm.

Jaemin (34:21)

It's chemical, it's biological, it's psychological, it's unconscious. And that as the child, the child starts in a very carefree, non-transactional experience of being themselves. I'm just here, not.

doing the dishes and not mowing the lawn and not contributing to my ecosystem in any way, shape or form. And yet I'm being rewarded, loved, nurtured, cared for, praised, fed. Hmm, turns out it's fine to be me. I can be relaxed and at ease being me, me as I am without performing, without achieving, without contributing is enough. Great. And then, then you, you know, you get somewhere past two, you know, somewhere around that the game breaks down.

And all of a sudden you're expected to participate, to perform, to conform, to behave. And no child's prepared for that. No one's ready for that. Such a surprise. And so the first time the child gets surprised, embarrassed, disappointed, upset, scolded, it's such a confusing experience, but all the alarm, those safety warning lights are going off through their whole being. There's a danger you didn't know about. You.

must pay attention and here's the thing the danger is in you the danger is you're not who you need to be to survive in this world so don't be you ever again like be other than you be better than you be different than you do not ever show up present and unguarded ever again or it will turn to shit so yes it's safe so then you build this safe world this safe persona these safe structures these familiar places where people

think you're good, think you're smart, think you're strong. Also, they never see the thing that you don't want them to see, which would be the ultimate danger and then you die. Yeah, it's entirely about a biological, chemical, psychological

need for safety that is unavoidable.

Bill Gasiamis (36:21)

Hmm. It what came up in my mind while you were chatting about that is often stroke survivors need to make some radical changes in their life, the way they go about their nutrition, who they hang out with, the stuff they listen to and read, the whole the whole thing. Like, know, it's sometimes it's a line in the sand moment and everything changes, and you've got to change everything I did. And

One of the challenges that stroke survivors have, well, I'll talk about me. I had the challenge of, well, I needed to stop smoking and I needed to stop drinking. But all my extended family and friends were smokers and drinkers. And stroke survivors often comment about how they lose friends after a stroke.

And we're I and I've kind of tried to unravel that a few times and understand what it is that makes it difficult for people to evolve and and adapt and grow and stop the behaviors that perhaps led to a stroke, you know, so that they don't have another one. And family and friends often do that. They kind of intervene in a way which says, Well, what do you mean we can't have a drink when we go out? Like that's we always go and have a drink.

And then that person has has to explain themselves, perhaps, or conform again, just to be part of the group. The question is, are we also dealing with the insecurities of our family and friends when we find a way to overcome our own insecurities, perhaps, about something, and then we start to change and evolve and move forward? Are they are those people feeling like

Transformational Journeys: Overcoming Obstacles

They're left behind. Th sometimes the sometimes the sentences that people hear when they try and stop smoking or drinking in a particular situation are you've changed.

You know, like it's a bad thing.

But it's not said in a positive way. People experience it on both sides of the coin in a negative way. The person who's saying to their friend who's had a stroke, who's trying to not have another one, is saying, You've changed and I don't like the way

you've changed. And the person changing is hearing I'm changing and now people are having a bad experience because I'm changing. Like

What's all that about with that other person in our life?

Jaemin (38:59)

Such a great question. Can I, genuine question, can I take five minutes to answer that question?

Bill Gasiamis (39:07)

You can, absolutely.

Jaemin (39:09)

because I think this opens up a possibility for a window into a whole different experience of life if you're willing to go down this thought experiment.

Bill Gasiamis (39:23)

I am. Let me switch my header off.

It's getting too hot in here.

Jaemin (39:31)

So I've just finished writing my first novel. It's a five year project. I thought it was impossible. And then it out it wasn't. It turns out I learned a lot about myself and the process of writing. And it's been a thoroughly delightful experience. But great storytelling, great fiction writing typically follows some kind of hero's journey trajectory. You've got a small, weak, lost, strange hero who

for whatever reason says yes to a cold wood venture and embarks on a journey of self-discovery and eventually has to go do the thing that only they can do along the way they meet a wisdom character. You know, there's a Gandalf, there's a Yoda, there's a Dumbledore, Mr. Miyagi, but eventually the hero's got to go face the biggest fear and do the thing that's impossible. And when they do, they come out the other side transformed and then they return home with that transformation and their whole world benefits.

So, so it is the process of transformation. It's the process of potential. It's the process of destiny. It's the process of seeing a person fulfilled in their experience of themselves. So a writer is bringing you in, in along for that journey. Now, if the writer transforms the hero magically or supernaturally, it's a horrible story. You

know, if the writer goes, you know, here's the weak person. They went to sleep and they woke up the next day transformed.

Who knows what happened. It was just, you're like, really? What's the point of that story? Like, that's a horrible story. If the transformation happens in a way that's supernatural or magic, it's false. The transformation happens through overcoming of obstacles. The weakling becomes strong by overcoming resistance. And the resistance is almost always through the form of characters.

So the writer says, stage, write the bully and to stage, write the villain, the parent, the trickster, the joker, the judge, the king, like, and so the hero doesn't know the story is being written about them. And so experiences all these characters very personally and wishes the characters would go away. But the audience kind of sees the gift in the character, sees the opportunity.

You know, when the audience sees a bully harassing a victim, what the audience is rooting for is that the victim would rise up and punch the bully in the nose. And something transformational happens if that victim ever does, you know, they actually then receive the bully's gift. All along the bully had this gift of personal power delivered in the form of oppression. And because the victim had to find such deep strength that they didn't even know existed to rise up and finally say this ends here, they'll never be the victim again.

And so in that way they're transformed. So you could make a case to go, thanks, bully for being a good bully because you made my life so hard. I didn't think it was possible to overcome you. Thank you. It's not personal. So a writer then is not going to write an empathetic bully, you know, a very emotionally intelligent, compassionate, they're going to write a thug. They're going to write a dullard. They're going to write someone who's big and does not change. And even though the, the hero wants to bully the change.

If the bully changes, if the bully goes to a spiritual retreat and comes home and change man and then apologizes and makes it up to the victim, it's kind of nice, but the audience is going, but the victim didn't have to become stronger in any way. So they're still just as strong and the next bully is coming and they're no better prepared. So all that to say, love, I love treating our own lives like this hero's journey story. I love gamifying the experience. I love going.

You know, this insecurity, a lot of people think if only I had a different experience

at childhood, then I wouldn't be so insecure now. If only there weren't so many difficult people blocking my path, then it would be easier for me. Like, what, do you mean? Like that's, that's not the tragedy. That's the setup. That's how the game begins. Like that's how the tensions created so that you have a gift of being able to overcome. So these people exist for you.

And yes, they're in your way. Great. Yes, they're making it hard. Perfect. But we only play hard games. Like if you're, you're playing footy and it's, you know, last year's premieres versus the under 10s girls side and you win, you, that's a very embarrassing experience. Like you don't eat. That's a horrible thing. You, know, this year's premieres, you know, sorry, last year's premieres versus the team that's got undefeated this year and you win that game.

You know, that's, that's a meaningful experience. and yeah, I love this idea that everyone comes into their twenties and thirties lost and confused. And most people are really upset about that. Wishing that their experience up till then had been different and feeling disqualified from a meaningful life because of what's happened, because of who said this and who's done that. But if you just zoom out and say it like a hero's journey or a beautiful game, then

then you realize, no, no, no, being lost and confused, oppressed, you know, that doesn't disqualify you. That's what qualifies you to go play. Now you can begin, now you can begin this journey of self-discovery to go all the way back to the beginning and see who you've always been all along. So it's a very different way of thinking about life, but I'm constantly confronted with people who treat the stuff that's happened to them as wounds.

And the best you could ever hope for is that eventually you could bring healing to yourself and it become a visible scar that doesn't really afflict you. Whereas this says, yeah, what if those things, what if life doesn't happen to you? It happens for you. And the real gift is your own opportunity to rediscover who you've always been by overcoming obstacles and especially in the form of people and especially in the form of insecure people.

who of course are going to make your journey difficult. Of course, you know, not everyone's cheering you on. Eventually the heroes got to go alone. Eventually they've got to. If they don't go alone, then they can't do the thing that only they can do.

The Hero's Journey and Storytelling

Bill Gasiamis (46:01)

Yeah. Man, that was well well worth the f the the time that you allocated to answer it because it's such an important part of recovery after anything.

and

In fact, I learnt about the Heroes Journey after my brain surgery. So we're talking about I don't know. I think I got out of hospital for after brain surgery in late 2014. And I think it was around 2017 I did a particular course that I was in. It was a behavioral modeling course and it was about modeling a behavior that we thought was one worth other people learning and repeating. And the

The person who was running the course, awesome friend of mine and mentor and teacher, a gentleman called Marvin Oka, he spoke about the hero's journey as part of this course to teach us about like how to tell a story. And I hadn't grasped the concept very well. but because of that course, my first book was able to become a reality. It took four years for me to.

make that happen. And I released it in twenty twenty twenty three, somewhere there. And since then I've done a bit of a deep dive into the hero's journey and understanding how to take people through a story. And my next book is structured that way. There's a moment where life is quote unquote normal and then there's an event and then there's everything, you know, there's been a spanner thrown in the works and everything is

not like it used to be. And now there is this post-traumatic growth experience that you can go on. And if you know you're going on it, it's easier to go on it. But some people are not aware that they might be going on this journey. They're just programmed from a previous way of doing life that these things are all terrible and bad and they're not good. And there's no growth and there's no learning and there's no opportunity. But there but there is, but we just framed it.

in our past way of thinking and that's not applicable now, even though we're still trying to apply it, apply it, apply it. And what you said about the the bully, I remember at school, if if I was a victim, bullies used to seek me out like like a mosquito knows who to go and sting, right?

Jaemin (48:40)

Yeah

Bill Gasiamis (48:42)

But then the first bully I punched in the nose

was was it. That was the key to unlocking the whole how other people perceived me in those types of situations. And then none of the bullies turned up to have a go because they weren't gonna get or or perhaps they saw that my response was going to affect their insecurities about themselves. Right. and realistically when I was going through stroke, stopping smoking, stopping drinking,

stopping attending the particular venues where smoking and drinking happened so that I can avoid smoking and drinking. It meant that certain people couldn't associate with me anymore. And

It's not that they were bullies, but when I learnt how to manage that situation once, the others that now I that I now interact with don't require us to interact in a way that includes smoking and drinking in a particular venue. We can have just as meaningful interactions without the smoking and drinking, without being in that venue, just being in a different location.

Doing a different thing. And and there's no n and and no one feels bad about that interaction. I don't feel about bad about it because I'm not partaking in something that the other person wants me to partake in. And the other person's not feeling bad because they're partaking in something that I'm not partaking in. And we're there for the same reason. We're there for the catch up. We're not there for the smoking and the drinking.

Jaemin (50:26)

Yeah, and that's often the way when you break through an archetypal character, a bully is a great example. It's not uncommon that there becomes a level of respect, a mutual respect post that violence or post the standing up for yourself. And it's not unheard of that bullies and victims become friends and respect each other. And so there

Bill Gasiamis (50:50)

Mm.

Jaemin (50:50)

must become a line in the sandwich like, whatever it costs me,

If I, you know, the smoking drinking example, if you never talked to me ever again, if you cannot, then that will be okay. But I cannot go here ever again. And I won't and you cannot make me and I won't be made. And so there it is. Great. That your audience is watching that cheering. Yes, transformed. Never be victim again. And then on the other side of that, it's often surprising what happens in those relationships. And it's not uncommon for mutual respect, even though

It's not guaranteed and you have to be willing to let go of it completely. Because yeah, the hero's got to go alone.

Bill Gasiamis (51:33)

we we're talking about it like, you know, you know, we're kinda having a a t a philosophical conversation, an intellectual conversation. We're doing all of this stuff. And I remember being literally on the football pitch fighting with a kid, and then once we'd thrown the punches and everyone had done what they had to do in that moment, it was are we are we done? All good? And and it was. We were done. And we were all good. And it was instinctive. Like I wasn't even ten years old or

eleven years old or something. And yeah, then we got along forever.

Understanding Bullies and Personal Growth

Jaemin (52:08)

A quicker side, but on the very same thread, if you keep thinking about characters like archetypes, do you know the hardest, but the most exciting, the most wonderful and the most, the biggest opportunity that the person in your life or the people in your life to treat as characters, not the bullies, any idea what makes the top of my list in terms of the characters with the biggest opportunity for growth.

Bill Gasiamis (52:39)

Just I'm kinda drawn to say family, my family, but

Jaemin (52:42)

family and parents make the top of the list. And I think

Bill Gasiamis (52:46)

Yeah, right.

Jaemin (52:47)

Sigmund Freud's greatest contribution was that the nest is the hardest challenge for the human to break free from the nest is number one. And all this function ultimately comes from the nest, the familial relationships, exerting unconscious pressures from the parent of the child and the child with the parent outliving their usefulness. And so

But in the same way, like no victim when they're being bullied wants to see it like an archer, like wants to say it like a gift. They want to be rescued or they want the bully to change. It's impossible to face a bully. Same with the parents. It's like, don't understand. This is my dad. You don't understand. Like it's just, you know, blood is thicker than water. You got to be there for family. Like it's just how it's

Bill Gasiamis (53:30)

Mm.

Jaemin (53:30)

always been. The way my parents make me feel like

no one wants that tension.

and would hope that the tension just goes away. But if you see it like a great story, it provides the greatest opportunity for your own sovereignty. You know, the bully's gift is personal power. The parent's gift is sovereignty. Because when you were born into their world, it's like you're born into a kingdom, king and queen on the throne, and it's their arbitrary rules. In this world, this is how we do it. You don't like it, bugger off down the street. But here, you know, do this, don't do that. Why, dad? Don't ask why, just do what I say.

So the parental relationship, parents are right even when they're wrong. And that's a really important distinction for the nature of those relationships. And so you are a subject inside a kingdom, their rules, their map of the world, their right, even when they're wrong. And it's incredibly hard to break free from that to create your own map of the world and

Bill Gasiamis (54:29)

Mm.

Jaemin (54:29)

for you to be the king. But if you see it like a setup and a game, well then,

Freud says, you must live as though your father is dead. You must depose the king. So

Bill Gasiamis (54:42)

Mm.

Jaemin (54:42)

if the king gets off the throne, if the king bows down to you, if the king goes, you your map of the world now is better than my map of the world, your way of thinking is better than my way of thinking, then there's no challenge, there's no resistance to overcome. So my favorite way of describing the role of the parents then is actually,

It's not to love and support and empower. They might do all that, but their central function in the hero's journey is to confuse you about who you really are.

Bill Gasiamis (55:12)

Wow.

Jaemin (55:13)

so that the game can begin. Like everyone comes into their 20s lost and confused and the primary confuses our parents because they impose their map of the world. They have their own sense of who you are and what you ought to do. And it doesn't suit a single person to be born into the family they're born into. And yet here you are having to adapt and fit in to a pre-existing ecosystem with rules, values, culture, and then you're given that name. So it's like,

You are this, this is who you are. It's like, no, it's just a bit of

Bill Gasiamis (55:46)

Wow.

Jaemin (55:47)

language like Jaemin Fra- I'm not Jaemin Fraser. What do you mean? Like, I was born into a family and those words were put on me. That's not who I am. And so

the confusion of growing up thinking that's exactly who I am, this is the limit of my experience of life. And I cling to this as my whole certainty.

is so wonderful because it's the ultimate resistance to break out of, to examine the structure of that, to examine the confusion and really go back and reparent yourself and really be the one who actually knows who you've always been and to nurture that into the real world and then to become sovereign. And you know you're sovereign when you become the one who's right, even when they're wrong. So you've got friends and family saying, what do you mean? It's not.

You need to be able to have a smoke. got to be able to drink. That's what everyone does. Not in my kingdom, we don't. In my kingdom,

Bill Gasiamis (56:39)

Mm.

Jaemin (56:39)

we don't smoke and we don't drink. You're an idiot. That's stupid. Well, I'm the king and this is my sovereignty. And if you want to come play in my world, this is how it works. And so, so many people are faced with those challenges. Then they keep pulling back from the edge because of their relational cost, hoping, wishing the world would go easier on them. But if you see it like a story in a game, it's like, it's a setup. It's all a setup.

So you could be the one who unconfuses yourself by having to overcome the relational resistance in your world and discover who you've always been.

Bill Gasiamis (57:15)

And we know it innately because we've all had that dad, mom, whomever, like I did what I had to do when I was in your house. Now this is my house. Now they this is how it applies. If you don't

Jaemin (57:26)

Yeah. Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis (57:27)

like it, you don't like it. Like I've actually thrown my dad out of my house in my twenties, when we moved out because my wife and I got married and we had kids and whatever, and they'd come over and visit to see the grandkid. You know, my

dad would do the whole

over helicopter grandparenting, you know. You know, the kids cold or the kids this and the kids that, you know, we lived this with this kid twenty four hours a day, seven days a week for five, six years, you know, like we knew its needs, you know, my my son's needs. And my dad just wouldn't have it that we what we were saying wasn't that we were saying was correct or was okay or was fine or whatever, you know, we were it was everything was good.

It was just his insecurities, I think. And it was like the first time that I really rebelled against my parent and said to him, Listen, man, if you don't like it, get out. And he actually got out. He got out of my kingdom and he went back to his kingdom where things were normal and

Jaemin (58:30)

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis (58:30)

he could run the show. because he couldn't run the show at my kingdom anymore. The thing about it is I'm learning the the beautiful lesson or understanding you just gave me now was that that was how it was meant to be.

Jaemin (58:44)

setup. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, no, that's unbelievable. Right? Yeah, yeah.

Bill Gasiamis (58:45)

And I took it personally. But it wasn't personal. It was necessary for him to impose his will and for me to have to go, nah, no more.

Jaemin (58:56)

Because if he gave it to you freely, nothing gets enlarged in you, you miss the opportunity. And then here's the here's the funny thing. If your actual parent does get out of the way too soon. unconsciously you replace your actual parents with other archetypal parents, you'll go find someone else.

The Role of Parents in Identity Formation

and you'll bow down to their kingdom. Someone else who knows better than you, someone else who's telling you what to do, you will submit to some other wisdom

and they'll be an overlord, they'll

be oppressive. It's how it works. Like so in the archetypal world, you either evolve or you repeat. So I've had people say, no, no, I left home at 18. It's not my parents. great, but you never got the gift. You're not sovereign. You now you just found this person and that person and this person who's still telling you what to do. You're still a boy. You're still a child to be a man.

requires a battle, you must become sovereign. That's the setup as a gift for you and the characters play a role for you. It's stunning when you see it.

Bill Gasiamis (59:54)

Yeah.

It's stunning now because you've shown me and man, like, yeah. I've kind of done the whole forgive your parents for the things that they did or said to you because they did the best with the information they had available to them, right? And I've done that. But this is kind of another level of that. Like just totally understanding that it that was all necessary. it's the same as it was necessary for my friends to challenge my

not smoking and my not drinking.

Jaemin (1:00:23)

Yeah, that's a good feeling.

Bill Gasiamis (1:00:25)

It's necessary for me to take the next step to put some certainty into my how much I was going to contribute to my ill health or not.

Bill Gasiamis (1:00:37)

You're listening to Recovery After Stroke with Jaemin Fraser, coach founder of the Insecurity Project and someone who's spent close to 20 years on the question of why capable people stop backing themselves. If what Jaemin been describing has landed, his work goes considerably deeper than we can in one conversation. He's just finished his first novel after five years on it, and he's spoken about

Purpose on the TEDx stage. Links will be in the show notes. And if you're listening to this thinking this is me, but I don't know where to start, that's the gap that I work in. I take on a small number of stroke survivors at a time for one-on-one

support, regular calls, accountability, and someone to talk it through with who's actually been there. It isn't therapy and it isn't medical treatment. It's structure and lived experience.

If that's what you're missing, you can apply at recoveryafterstroke.com/momentum.

Now back to Jaemin and to what insecurity is actually costing you while you're trying to heal.

Jaemin (1:01:46)

That's exactly right. But one of the funnest experiments to do is

to just examine the fantasy, the often unspoken fantasy that people have. If only my parents were better, more loving, more kind, more present, things would have turned out differently. Well, just go have a look at what happens if you get given a perfect parent. It does happen. People do grow up in really nurtured, beautiful, empowering, loving spaces. They're my most insecure clients.

Bill Gasiamis (1:02:13)

Mm-hmm.

Jaemin (1:02:14)

they come out even more confused. And in some ways, like I'm not saying I'm a perfect parent, but I do know that I'm a really good parent. I've been very present. I'm emotionally intelligent. I'm wise. I'm loving. So I've done a good job, but in doing a good job, I've confused the shit out of both my children in very different ways. So my daughter, who's quite similar to me, often really enjoyed...

my way of seeing things and my thinking. And so would seek me out for counsel and wisdom at difficult points in her life. And I would always have wisdom for her. And it was wisdom that would work. But in giving her my wisdom, which she think you'd want from your dad, I then confused her about her own wisdom. So then she comes into the world unsure, will I ever be as wise as dad? Will I ever know what to do for myself? Will I ever be able to solve my own problems? So, you know, I've confused her by being wise and my son,

I've confused him by succeeding. So he never really saw me suck as a coach and a business owner. He's only really seen me succeed. So he looks at my lifestyle,

plenty of time, plenty of money, you know, you know, it all looks so easy. And then he goes out in the workforce and it's also fucking hard, you know, and he's a shit kicker at the bottom of the pile, earning no money. And he looked at me, he's like, huh,

I, I'm incapable. I will never get to where you are. So

I'm, you've set the bar too high and now I'll never get it. And so it, you know, it, it nearly destroyed him that revelation. So if you can see that there's no way around it, that's your parents' job to confuse you. You cannot protect your own children from insecurity and nor would you want to, even if you could. It's the necessary setup of the game so that you can come into your twenties and thirties lost and confused. And that's not the tragedy. That's the setup. Now the game can begin.

Bill Gasiamis (1:04:03)

man, so many insights here. I love it. My book, I'm the confuser. That's the whole purpose of the title of my book, The Unexpected Way

Jaemin (1:04:10)

I'm not.

Bill Gasiamis (1:04:11)

That a Stroke Became the Best Thing That Happened.

Jaemin (1:04:14)

Very, yeah, that's great.

Bill Gasiamis (1:04:15)

man, it's just a completely different way to think about it. Cause that's what I do. And often I get I'm, you know, 14 years out from all the journeys and the struggle and the drama that I faced. So people come to the podcast, they listen to an episode.

They see me in the way that I interact and talk, and they think, I'm I'm so early on in my recovery. I I'm never I'm never gonna be like Bill.

Jaemin (1:04:40)

Yeah, well, yep.

Bill Gasiamis (1:04:42)

And I'm not intending to make people feel like they need to be like me or that I've just got here from there. And I talk about my stroke like nothing. Like

Jaemin (1:04:51)

Mm-hmm.

Bill Gasiamis (1:04:52)

that's not my intention. My intention is to provide you with things to think about that are not in your

thought process under normal situations or you've never considered or you didn't know you needed to know about or whatever it is, right? And it again, it's that my role is to be the confuser. It is to take the seat, to have the conversation, and then to generate confusion. And then they often come out in questions in, you know, the YouTube channel or via an email, or it often opens it it often opens like a

a rabbit hole that people then need to go down and investigate themselves to become more more certain, less confused or more secure, or whatever the word is that, you know, that the experience that they're chasing or they're feeling they need to find. So I did struggle with perhaps generating an illusion that stroke

I you know, like I've just nailed it. Like I've had a stroke or three and I had brain surgery and I couldn't walk, but now I am. And it's like I was always concerned about that perception that people developed of me by listening to one podcast episode and then the role that that played in maybe setting them back in their recovery, which of course there's not my intention, right? so I love that the confuser is necessary.

In everyone's journey. And if I see myself as an acute as a confuser, then I don't need to think about how.

the thing that I do is I talk about how stroke experiences are so broad, the spectrum is so wide that I can't

that that that I can't sort of help everyone in the spectrum because it's so wide and that I somehow that makes this podcast lesser or I or I'm inadequate or I'm not doing a good enough job or I haven't put enough episodes out or you know whatever. So that's a real gift that

Jaemin (1:07:10)

Hmm.

Bill Gasiamis (1:07:11)

I just received now. And hopefully the people listening and watching are getting a similar gift from this part of the conversation.

Jaemin (1:07:20)

Yeah, lovely.

Bill Gasiamis (1:07:23)

as we continue, what does insecurity cost people? Like from a stroke recovery perspective, you know, bringing insecurity into that, I I expect has a cost. What

Jaemin (1:07:38)

Hmm.

Bill Gasiamis (1:07:39)

what do you see as the main cost that people sort of pay for remaining insecure?

Jaemin (1:07:48)

I just think about it as a, as a resource issue, a resource cost. So when everything's fine, there's plenty of margin in your life. And if you're driving a whole bunch of resources towards proving and defending yourself and covering and compensating, but everything's working, it's not really costing you anything, but when you have no margins, so when something terrible happens and then all your best resources are still being directed to proving and defending, covering and compensating.

You've now got zero resources to be directed towards growth, towards safety, towards internal certainty. So you are now in great peril. So a stroke puts you into survival mode and now you've got no resources to survive because all your best resources directed elsewhere to make sure no

Bill Gasiamis (1:08:34)

Mm-hmm.

Jaemin (1:08:35)

one sees your inadequacy. So then it costs you everything. It costs you your

future. It costs you your ability to heal, to make sense of this, to come out the other side and reinvent or do whatever you need to be present for yourself.

So I think, yeah, that is the cost. It's a slow descent into madness really, if all your best resources are proving and defending, covering and compensating, then you stop being human, you stop being alive, you stop being present, you become hypervigilant around what others are thinking and you just keep your world keeps getting smaller. And that's not being dramatic,

Bill Gasiamis (1:09:09)

Yeah.

Jaemin (1:09:11)

it's a significant cost.

Bill Gasiamis (1:09:13)

It's real. In stroke recovery, I call it energy. Energy is because, you know, stroke survivors suffer, you know, incredible fatigue after stroke. You know, the brain is so resource heavy that when it's not running optimally because a part of it is injured and it's rewiring and it's trying to heal, it's it's it's increasing the need of energy from the body. And you need to be able to optimize that.

so that you can allocate as much resources to the brain to heal and to rewire as possible. And I often talk about it from the perspective of of the emotional recovery after stroke. People often avoid emotional conversations because initially they're physically the most obvious issue is physical. You know, my left side doesn't work or my right side doesn't work or my face is droopy or I can't see properly. So they attend to the most obvious things.

And then they get some point down the track and they realize they've never attended to the emotional, psychological aspect of the recovery. And they're being inefficient in those spaces and therefore taking resources away from the brain healing. And it whole thing compounds and it decreases.

Jaemin (1:10:34)

Yeah,

that makes sense. And I think, cause people typically tie their identity and value and worth to the roles and relationships that they've constructed. So you

described your experience of a stroke. All of a sudden you can't be the same guy. can't work the same way or your relationships have changed. So if all your identity is tied to that and now it's gone, you're in crisis emotionally, psychologically. If you don't have any resources to examine that.

it's going to be a significant cost.

The Cost of Insecurity in Recovery

Bill Gasiamis (1:11:06)

Yeah.

Often in in a in a serious health is incident,

people kind of experience grief. My old life was such and such and all these things that I haven't got now, I can't do now or I can't go back to.

How does someone tell the difference between like legitimate grief over real loss of function and insecurity?

Can you can those lines blur the like do those lines blur?

Jaemin (1:11:49)

Yeah, I think it is again, what exactly are you losing here because...

Bill Gasiamis (1:11:54)

So for example, just so I can give it a little bit more

Jaemin (1:11:56)

Yeah, please.

Bill Gasiamis (1:11:57)

context, like somebody loses the ability to use one of their limbs or the one of their sides, right? So, and then that's legitimate, right? Like I've not able to use this part of me anymore. And that comes with a certain amount of things that I cannot, will not be able to do again. That's grief. But then moving forward, like how do you you know, well, there's an insecurity piece there as well, but it's

Jaemin (1:12:22)

Yeah, well,

this is

Bill Gasiamis (1:12:24)

Linked.

Jaemin (1:12:24)

when it becomes personal. I can't use my leg anymore, which means I can't run anymore. And my whole identity is identity has been tied with being a runner. So I'm not a runner. Who am I? So now there's not only the loss of a limb, there's a loss of an identity and a loss of a strategy to demonstrate your value and worth to the world. So now insecurity is exposed. So there's grief. then the exposure, the personal exposure is the real that's going to hurt a lot more.

and the lines will blur very clearly in there. But of course that is a grief. You have lost something that you enjoyed and that is to be acknowledged and understood and appreciated. That is a sadness. That's a loss. That's appropriate to feel sadness. And the danger is when it becomes personal. That's the whole insecurity conversation. Then you put yourself in great peril and can spiral into all kinds of dark places.

Bill Gasiamis (1:13:20)

Mm-hmm.

Jaemin (1:13:20)

And then

you have to cling to something else. you know, I've seen lots of people, you know, I'm training for Sydney Marathon at the moment. My Instagram feed is full of Instagram runners. One of my friends yesterday read an article, he showed me that the top job in the world now is shit runner, good Instagrammer. People are making careers out of being mediocre runners, but good at Instagram.

But you know, my feet is full of people who are proving something with their running. Like this tragedy happened to me. So I'm proving I'm a good person by my resilience and my ability to do ultra marathons. good. Good on you. you know, so then someone has a loss, a physical loss. They go past the grief of the physical loss. It's personal, but now they're so driven to cover that personal by then using that as another opportunity to prove they're awesome by now.

being superhuman and doing more than the average. show them, can still run a bloody marathon even though I've had a stroke, even though it takes me seven hours. And then I'll be the most famous stroke surviving marathon runner that ever existed. And then the world will know I'm a good person. So, you know, it can get all kinds of crazy when people don't deal with the insecurity and then feel driven to keep going back into more creative ways to prove and defend themselves.

Bill Gasiamis (1:14:50)

What's the right way to sign up for a ultramarathon then? Is there anyone running an ultramarathon

Jaemin (1:14:55)

No.

Bill Gasiamis (1:14:58)

who isn't running because of insecurity?

Jaemin (1:15:01)

no, no, no, it's not possible. You need to have some significant childhood trauma driving you some demons. Like those guys are crazy. I got friends that do ultra marathon.

Bill Gasiamis (1:15:11)

Same.

Jaemin (1:15:11)

I love them, but they're all, they're all crazy.

Bill Gasiamis (1:15:14)

Same.

Jaemin (1:15:15)

yeah, I, no, I don't know. It's probably, of course it's possible. There are people who love to run and are very good at it. yeah, I think some of the, the Jim Warmesley.

characters that they're really elite of the elite ultra marathon is their body is so extraordinarily shaped and designed for that. It's a credit to them. they're better suited to an ultra marathon than a road marathon. And so they're really showing

up doing the thing. But there's a lot of people out there just entirely driven by reading David Goggins book to, you know, hard

Bill Gasiamis (1:15:51)

I was gonna say

Jaemin (1:15:51)

enough, stop being a little bitch and prove to the world you are good.

by how much you can suffer.

Bill Gasiamis (1:15:57)

was gonna say that about David Goggins. He seems to me like to be the epitome of the insecure runner who's chasing who's running from something or chasing something he's never gonna get to or arrive at.

Jaemin (1:16:07)

Yeah, there's no end. There's no end because

he gets older and he's still got to keep proven fighting against the younger people. There is no, there's no exit strategy to that. That ends badly. You can't

Bill Gasiamis (1:16:15)

Yeah. Yeah.

Jaemin (1:16:16)

ever go, okay, I've done enough now. It's, there's no date there. It's just keep going. Never end. The next thing,

Bill Gasiamis (1:16:22)

Yeah.

Jaemin (1:16:23)

the bigger thing, the harder thing. So.

Bill Gasiamis (1:16:27)

What are the tells? I I'm listening to this right now, like and and I wanna know whether this is me, right? So what am I looking for in my own behaviour this week?

Jaemin (1:16:39)

That is evidence of insecurity.

Bill Gasiamis (1:16:42)

Mm.

Jaemin (1:16:44)

Prove and defend like is the generalization. If that's an, sometimes that's too abstract for people, but that might be enough just to notice what is the motivation here? If there were nothing to prove and defend, would I still be doing this in this way? Because to me, like I got to do a TEDx talk a few years back around purpose, find your purpose. And that was the theme of the conference. And I said, well, in order to solve, find your purpose, you've actually got to...

eradicate insecurity because what looks like purpose, there's a lot of people out there. This is my purpose to solve this problem

Bill Gasiamis (1:17:18)

Mm-hmm.

Jaemin (1:17:18)

and chase this mission. When you look a bit closer at what they're actually doing is look at me. I'll show you how valuable how good I am by my work in the world. So

Bill Gasiamis (1:17:30)

Mm.

Jaemin (1:17:30)

it can't be your purpose to prove that you matter. It can't be your purpose to prove that you're good, smart, strong, that can't be a purpose. That's your work. That's your adult work to resolve.

what it is that you have said about yourself and is it accurate? Is it fair? Have you misunderstood? So that you can come into the world with nothing to prove and defend and then connect to purpose. It's not even about you. That's bigger than you. So he could just show up with kindness and just, you know, optimize for aliveness. Do the things that give you joy, do the things that are meaningful to you, not because you need it to validate, approve, support, you know, endorse you. So.

Yeah, that's the broad answer to the question. If you're willing to do an inquiry around the motivation, prove and defend, or if I had nothing to prove and defend, I still think about this in the same way. You know, what need am I meeting here? Am I looking to this external thing to give me certainty or significance or love? And, you know, to cover an absence of my own willingness to give that to myself. But yeah, I think.

You know, insecurity is always a conversation about perceived inadequacy. And, and I'm convinced there's only seven versions of that. Is it that you're bad? Is it that you are worthless? Is it that you're stupid? Is it that you're ugly? Is it that you are weak? Is that you're weird or a loser? So I think then if you notice any motivation towards the opposite, I'm trying to be good. I'm trying to be smart. I'm trying to be strong. I'm trying to be normal. I'm trying to be a winner. I'm trying to be beautiful. I'm trying to be.

whatever the other one is that I missed, then it's still insecurity driven. The motivation is to move away from something you're sure and to drive towards the other. And so, yeah, when you really are willing to examine the structure of that accusation in the first place, you will have misunderstood and you can then free yourself from trying to not be one and desperate to be the other and just be you.

Finding Purpose Beyond Insecurity

Bill Gasiamis (1:19:34)

I found I love that. I found I came across purpose and meaning for the first time after three brain hemorrhages and a and brain surgery, right? Like before that, I just fell into go to work, make money, buy a house, buy cars, put the kids through school, make sure the kids are safe, make sure the kids are fed, do this for the kids, do that for my wife.

Like the it wasn't it wasn't intentional at all. It was just like, okay, this is what you do. You do this for all those people. Then they become teenagers, they leave the house and it's like, okay, what do I do now? I don't know who I am or what it is. The podcast was about me at the beginning. It was about me finding people that were like me to help me get through what I needed to go through because it's isolating going through a stroke and not understanding what's happening and

How to navigate it and all that kind of stuff. And then around episode 40 or

something is when I first realized that there was way more to this than me. And it was how other people were experiencing my interviews and their feedback and response made me feel the first opportunity to say stroke was the best thing that happened to me, because I've now discovered my

purpose and meaning, which my children are part of.

But there just one aspect of it, and I think purpose and meaning really is to serve for me, was to serve other people and expect nothing back. And it just was what enabled me to overcome those insecurity hurdles and barriers, which were the what will people think of me? which was then initially it was about me.

And now there's 400 episodes and I don't really care what people think of me, it's serving the need out there in the community. And people are people are engaging however they want to engage, and I don't have a I don't have an expectation on how they engage. It's just, you know, it's going out there, it serves the community, it makes a difference and

I don't feel insecure about it, but I did at the beginning, which was really interesting, you know, to find myself insecure about serving the community because I started off with serving myself and it was self-serving. And

Jaemin (1:22:07)

Mm. Mm.

Bill Gasiamis (1:22:09)

I think when you're doing something in the wider community that's self-serving, people suss you out, you know, and they kind of realize that you're perhaps not genuine. Even though I wasn't intending not to be genuine,

Jaemin (1:22:22)

Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis (1:22:23)

it still appeared

a little less genuine engagement wasn't as high as it was when I started to make it about everyone else.

Jaemin (1:22:34)

Amazing discovery. I really like that.

Bill Gasiamis (1:22:39)

It's a huge episode for me, you know, coming across your work, the work that you do in the space of insecurity. And I think it was a couple of weeks ago that we met. I've been reflecting on that in the last couple of weeks, and it's just been a real wild journey.

Jaemin (1:22:57)

Hmm.

Bill Gasiamis (1:22:59)

so

I mean, I I this could be a massive conversation. It'd go longer and longer and and it doesn't need to I suppose as we kind of get to the end of the interview, I wanna

I I don't wanna do this but just the nature of the format sort of requires that is that like

You know, what's the what what's the out? What how do we how do we wrap up a conversation about insecurity to people who may have never had the opportunity to hear somebody whose work has all been about overcoming insecurity? Like how do we wrap that up in a nice little bundle and make it a beautiful outro to to an episode like this? maybe people know the word insecurity, but it's the first time they've heard about like the deeper

topics that we've discussed, you know, how do we kind of wrap it up?

Jaemin (1:23:59)

Hmm. Well, contrary to the general experience and opinion of insecurity, where it's just a thing that all humans share and you just kind of hope it doesn't affect you too much and see how you can manage it. I'm absolutely convinced it's a solvable problem. It's a very predictable problem. It's a very boring problem. Like having delved into this for

you know, 16,000 coaching hours, you know, nearly two decades. It's like, it's just so straightforward. There's, there's not ever an experience where someone tells me their story and I'm going, geez, wow. No, you're rooted. That's outside the scope. Sorry. Just like, yeah, I mean, of course it seems like a really complicated,

unique experience. It's really not. It's a, no one escapes their childhood without getting confused about who they are. And that's not the tragedy. It's just the setup. So.

It's a, there's a gift waiting for you if you'd like it. And the gift is you get to go on a hero's journey and be the hero in your own life and rescue yourself from your own worst opinion about you as a kid. What a fun ride that is. Like, I don't know, is there anything more exciting than that? So yeah, it's, it's a solvable problem. You can eradicate it because it's not, it's not built on actual substance. There's actually nothing wrong with you. It's just the idea there's something wrong with you.

you formed as a child and then agreed with your own assessment and wrapped it in certainty. So then you just gathered more and more evidence to prove it's truants become a self-fulfilling prophecy. But if you're willing to go back to the beginning, which no one wants to, by the way, you know, it's like, can't you just fix it from this end? Can't you just buy a jump? I saw someone at park run last week wearing this jumper that said, are enough. Like, problem solved. I'll shut down the

Bill Gasiamis (1:25:51)

Ha ha.

Jaemin (1:25:52)

insecurity project and just.

buy a whole bunch of these jumpers that ought to do it.

Bill Gasiamis (1:25:56)

Ha ha ha ha.

Jaemin (1:25:59)

yeah, why didn't I think of that? You can't solve it from this end. You can't just try now. now I'm just going to be kind to myself. Now I'm going to think good thoughts about it myself. Now I'm going to tell myself, no, no, no, you will have to deconstruct the world you've built for yourself and rebuild it again. That's the fun of it. You will have to go back to the beginning, to the misunderstanding, to the moment in time.

where you encounter the adult world and you perceived inadequacy for the very first time. And there's always a very first time. It's not where you started, but there was a catastrophic moment in your childhood where you went, my goodness, there is a lack, a limit and inadequacy. And the fun of it is you can narrow the field search. You're only looking for one or more of seven things. Like it's all in there and no one escapes that. So if you're willing to have a look at it, you can actually have a look at it. You can survive it. And more than that, you could actually

become the person you've always dreamed of, the person you've known has always been there by breaking through the confusion you've lived in about your own value and worth.

Bill Gasiamis (1:27:07)

And see that's why you're never gonna have a t shirt because you can't fit that on the back of a t shirt.

Jaemin (1:27:12)

That's right.

Well, it stands to hang on, turn around. Yeah. Yeah, that's exactly right. It's the voice, problem. I, you know, I get interviewed on insecurity all the time. This has been one of my favorite ever conversations that I'm not just saying that to you, Bill. Often I get asked questions, pre-prepared questions. Okay. Can you tell me about insecurity, Jaemin? And you've got 30 seconds to wrap a short form. Okay. Next question. Where did insecurity come from? And it's like, man.

You know, it's a difficult subject. It's, it's, needs a bit of unpacking, you know, so to be able to let it breathe and have a conversation like we've had, I think it just really gives people a window into go, hang on a minute. Maybe, maybe I could have a look at my own insecurity. Maybe it's not too big, too scary. Maybe there's even a gift in here. Okay. That's interesting.

Bill Gasiamis (1:28:01)

And I'm gonna take that with me to the rest of my week and my life. Thank you so much for joining me on the podcast.

Jaemin (1:28:08)

It's been an absolute pleasure. Thank you, Bill.

Bill Gasiamis (1:28:10)

Well, that was Jaemin Fraser. And what a cool episode. That was one of the more useful hours that I've spent. The part I'll be carrying around is the resource around argument. Proving and defending yourself costs energy. And when everything's going well, you've got enough spare capacity that you never notice the bill. After a stroke, you don't.

Every bit of energy spent managing how you appear to other people is energy not available for rewiring and healing. If you've been wondering where your reserves are going, that's a place worth looking. And the line I suspect will stay with a lot of you. Being lost and confused doesn't disqualify you. It's what qualifies you to begin. Now you can find Jaemin work at JaminFraser.com.

And links to all the other resources we mentioned will be in the show notes Along with his TEDx talk. If this episode gave you something, send it to someone who needs to hear it. That's how this show reaches the people it's meant to reach. And if you'd like to go further with the reframe Jaemin describing, have a listen to our earlier episode on post-traumatic growth in stroke recovery. Same ground.

From a survivor's side.

Two ways to take this further. The book. The unexpected way that a stroke became the best thing that happened is available at recoveryafterstroke.com/book. If you want to work on this with me directly, I offer one on one support to a small number of stroke survivors at a time over three or six months. Rebuilding confidence after setbacks is a lot of what we do. Apply at recoveryafterstroke.com/momentum.

I'm Bill Gasiamis, thanks for being here. Keep going.