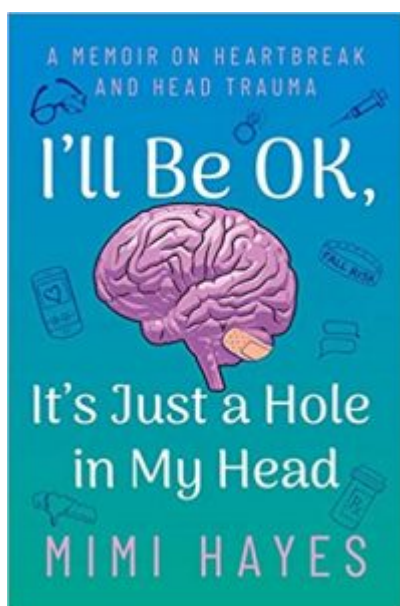


60. I'll Be Ok It's Just A Hole In My Head - Mimi Hayes

Mimi Hayes - A Memoir on Heart Break and Head Trauma



Mimi Hayes is a New York-based comedian and author of the memoir *"I'll Be OK, It's Just a Hole in My Head."* A former high school teacher and brain injury survivor, Hayes wrote her first humorous memoir while recovering from a traumatic head injury at the age of twenty-two.

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writing the book was a form of like therapy for me. It was, it was, it was terrifically awful, you know, writing it because it was so painful to go through all these things again, and for my family to even like recounted it again, and re you know, relive it again. And that was really hard for all of us. Because it's so traumatic, you know, and you know, the moment that it's something I talked about on stage now to is the moment that they told me that, you know, you're, and they didn't even tell me they told my mom is my mom, I was in the ER with her. And he said, Your daughter reigns bleeding. And when that happened, I didn't know I thought I was gonna die right there.

Intro 0:50

This is recovery after stroke with Bill Gasiamis helping you go from where you are to where you'd rather be.

Bill 0:57

So Mimi, welcome to the program.

Mimi 1:02

Thank you so much for having me.

Bill 1:03

Good morning. Over there your time. Thank you for waking up at 7am to be on the podcast.

Mimi 1:09

Oh, yes. Any anything for a podcast?

Bill 1:14

Hey, I came across your Instagram post. That's where I find all my guests for the podcast. Instagram is such a cool place to find people. And the reason why I decided to get in touch it was because of the name of your book. show it off to us for a second and tell us what it's called.

Mimi Hayes Book

Mimi 1:35

Yes, it is called I'll be okay. It's just a hole in my head. A Memoir on heartbreak and head trauma by Mimi Hayes. That's my book.

Bill 1:46

That's amazing. We'll talk about that in a little bit. But before we do, can you tell me a little bit about what happened to you?

Stressed Out



Mimi 1:54

Yeah, so in 2014, I was becoming a high school teacher. I was in Colorado and I was five days into my student teaching job. And I started feeling really, really tired. And I was dizzy. And some of these things were just things I've never experienced before, you know, a bunch of nausea, and you know, dizziness, kind of stumbling off

curbs. And after a couple rounds of being misdiagnosed with a couple different ridiculous things, they finally found that I had a cavernous angioedema that had, you know, hemorrhaged into a structure of cells that have had a parent apparently been there my entire life. And, you know, I think probably because of stress is my theory, that little structure, you know, I stroked into that little, little nugget.

And at first they said, you know, it's, it's a little too dangerous to touch it right now. So just, you know, go back home and chill out. And, you know, rest up and see if it will maybe go back to normal, which sometimes it does. In my case, I was at home, my parents house in Aurora, and the course of a month, I lost my ability

and half my body as any stroke victim, will have. I my speech became a little slurred, my vision was double. I was losing my taste, which was tragic, because I love food. And all the while, I just didn't really know how to, like, deal with this information, you know. And so one of my friends said, you know, want to write a book about it.

And I didn't really have anything better to do. so I did, but I couldn't use my left hand. So I was just typing with my right hand. And I was like, wow, this is gonna take a long time. If I'm writing this, just with one hand. So eventually, I did do a brain surgery. And because they had gotten too big for that, you know, they said, okay, it's pretty dangerous now, if you can't taste, that means it's moving towards your brain stem. So I went in and did a surgery, it was a smashing success. But I still ended up having to do two weeks of intensive therapy, after the fact, which was a blessing. Because I re-learned how to walk, I really learned how to see, fix my vision, very DIY, you know, with a piece of tape over my glasses. Everything was just happening so quickly, my brain was just wiring itself back together in that time, and went back home. And within a few months, I was back in the classroom.

Intro 4:45

If you've had a stroke, and are in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time it can be, you're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind. Like, how long will it take to recover? Will I actually recover? What things should I avoid? In case I'm make matters worse, doctors will explain things. But obviously, because you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask. If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you finding yourself in that situation, stop whining, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you. It's called seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke. These seven questions are the ones bill wished he'd asked when he was recovering from a stroke. They'll not only help you better understand your condition, they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery. head to the website now, recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide it's free.

Mimi 5:54

After brain surgery, and I was teaching again. And I really haven't stopped like moving since then. But yeah, that that's kind of the the short of it.

Bill 6:06

Wow, that's a that's a really great outcome. Firstly, so well done. Congratulations, amen. All those things, you know, whatever we need to do to win really need to pay, pay thanks to something someone because that is a great outcome. Really? How old were you? When it happened?

Mimi 6:30

I was 22. I was 22

Mimi 6:33

Right, which is still crazy, right? But you know,

I also didn't take on the stroke word until like this year, and I still feel kind of, you know, like, should I can I? Because it's, you know, I always just call it my, you know, my brain hemorrhage. I had a hemorrhage, you know, it's like, Well, yeah, that's, that's a stroke. You know, like that's. So I think no matter what you call it, like, I think, yeah, the word stroke doesn't have a certain kind of weight behind it and the seriousness to it, that I never really took on until this whole community of you know, stroke survivors and cavernous angioma, people. And there's so many of us out there that are looking for each other, you know, so it's found me,

Bill 7:18

yes, it is cool, that i found you there is so many. And I was also surprised about the amount of people who I've interviewed on the podcast so far that have had AVMs, another name for it arteriovenous malformation, that have said that they had this same thing. And a lot of them put it down to stress as well. So that was interesting that you said that, because I was quite stressed at the time. And the people that I've interviewed previous episodes also told me that they were going through, you know, often for large amounts of work and tough times emotionally, or family problems, things like that. So it was interesting that you said stress, so what was stressful in your life at the time, you're 22? Like, you're not supposed to be stressed about anything supposed to be having a break.

Mimi 8:11

Yeah, um, so teaching was really, really crazy. You know, it for context to and this is, this is in the book as well. But I had just gotten out of a five year long relationship. And a huge, you know, my first ever heartbreak was like, right after I graduated college. So it's like, okay, you're an adult, okay, also, this isn't gonna

work out the way you thought it would. And also, you got to go teach. So like, you know, I tried to really focus my efforts. After the heartbreak, I was just like, Okay, all right, you know, I did a bunch of things to try to distract myself from that, and got into the classroom.

And it was just crazy, you know, like, it was just nothing can prepare you for a room of teenagers, you know, on you, even the first week of school is like, you know, kind of an easier week, I guess, because you're not in the thick of it yet, you're still in the like, Okay, I'm getting to know you phases, but just all the meetings and trying to keep up with all the information. You know, I think now of all the all this stuff, I had to keep track of, you know, and, and all the things I had to do every day. And it's interesting, you know, I don't, this might be in the book, I can't remember.

But when I was teaching, after, after the hemorrhage, and things were like, even crazier, because I was like now teaching with a brain hemorrhage that had just healed a second ago. You know, but as I was in the classroom, with my teacher, that was, I was still a student teacher, you know, for the first I had to get through that stage first before I got my own classroom. But every afternoon, I would go and I'd wash the coffee pots, and I would like do the dishes in the teachers lounge. And my other teacher collaborating teacher would catch me and she'd be like, you don't have to do that. And I was like, No, I do this is the only thing I have control over. This is the only thing that is predictable in this career, is washing this coffee pot. And that was just like a symbol for like teaching. It was just like so unpredictable. And, you know, you think you know what you're getting into, and you just really don't. And so that was that was teaching crazy.

An Overdue Apology

Bill 11:31

On behalf of all of those teenagers Can I apologize, because I haven't had an opportunity to apologize to my teachers. And when I was a teenager, I was one of those students that teachers didn't want to have.

Mimi 10:48

You know, thank you. Thank you so much. A lot of my students have now come back and said, Hey, sorry. Yeah, we love you. And they see what I'm doing now,

especially I've allowed them to add me on social media. And, you know, they listen to things that I'm doing. And some of them even came to my book launch, which was really cute. And they just think I'm so cool. You know, they're like, wow, you're like doing these things. You know, you were just there with us in that classroom. And we were giving you such a hard time.

And now you're like a published author, like, yeah, yeah, I did that. While I was like grading your papers, I was also like, writing a book, you know, and I had to kind of negotiate between those two, which was really hard, because I really felt this story coming out of me, I was like, this is a really important story to tell. But I also have to, like, do this job. And, you know, do be a good teacher, you know, so it was just really hard to negotiate the deal.

Bill 11:46

And you're also dealing with recovery from a brain hemorrhage, which is pretty serious

Mimi 11:51

Oh, yeah. Don't forget about that. Yeah, yeah, that adds a whole new layer to to life.

Bill 12:00

You know, what I love isn't a great now that the children can follow you. And they can see the error of their ways before they get to 44. Like me, and they can go wow, she actually was pretty cool. She was just with us, she was helping us out. And she was doing all these things. I never got to do that until I reflected a long, long, long, long time later, when my children became teenagers. And I saw what a pain in the bum they were for their teachers, and when I met these teachers, and they were amazing. And all that we're trying to do was teach them.

And although we're trying to do with support them, and they, they were trying to do that for likely hundreds of students every day, and all they got was grief back by 99% of them. We have this thing in Australia where everyone says, You know what, and when I say everyone in the media, when issues come up with teachers pay and teachers entitlements and teaches stress levels,. Everyone talks about it as being one of they whinge about they have more public more holidays than most people because you have term break holidays, and, you know, long, long break. But you don't seem to teachers don't seem to really benefit much more than the

average person when they have these additional holidays. Would that be accurate?

Mimi 13:23

Yeah, you know, I think about teaching is just being in a trench, just like being a big old trench during wartime. And it never really ends, like, you know, even during the summer, right? And they kept shortening. I was amazed by this, like, the first year. I was like, Oh, yeah, I have like three whole months. And then it was like, No, you have like two and a half. And you're like, Okay, and then the next year, it's like, two, and you know, you get these like summers, right. But it's like, during the summer, you're also work like you're working to like you are relaxing, you're getting to like, you know, I was writing a lot during my summers.

But then you also have like, this month, kind of before school where you have to like, lesson plan again, get your curriculum ready, like go to meetings, go to trainings, get in your classroom again, and organize it again, and clean up because it's all dusty, and you know, get everything ready. And I spent so many hours in my classrooms, just making them so cute. They were adorable. I had all these I mean, I think that's what drew me to teaching the first place. Let's just get that clear was like the design of a classroom. I really probably could have been like an interior designer, but no, I was like, No, I have to be a teacher because I like how the classroom looks like.

But you get in there, and I would just decorate it and make it so cute. And, and then you know, during the year, slowly, all those cute things I'd put on the walls just slowly started to get ripped off. And like, I'll never forget, I had these pens that my friend had sent me with these flowers on them. Because kids, you know, they forget their utensils, you know, they forget their pencils, whatever. So I'm like, Hey, this is my pen, you can borrow it, my friend gave it to me, it's got a cute flower on it, so that you won't take it. Right. And literally within a day, those pens, all the flowers were like ripped up. They're like on the ground, the kids steal them. I'm like, Are you serious?

Bill 15:26

That's my friends gift

Mimi 15:29

That's my, you know, so it's like, they literally they wreck everything. But um, you

know, the thought being like, oh, like, this is easy. You have a structure? Your 7 to 3? No, we're 24/7. I mean, there was never a time that I wasn't thinking about my job, that I wasn't emailing or calling parents. I mean, the amount of hours I spent in that classroom, nobody else was there. It was huge, you know, and I so was in the early stages, it was in my first two years. So I care a whole lot. And I wanted to do well. And I wanted to, you know, see these kids succeed. But that didn't happen. You know, in the times that society says that, like, that's what I'm doing that time.

Like, if anything, I worked more outside of the classroom than I did in the actual classroom. You know, so when it comes to those discussions about teachers pay, and like even the school district, or the school that I started out in, actually went on a teacher strike, like this past year. And to watch all that stuff happening from here in New York now I'm like, wow, like, I guess I'm glad that I got out of there when I did. Because it's really hard to be in that trench and to be fighting for those kids, that's all you're doing is fighting for those kids and make sure that they can live those lives that you want them to, but teachers are under so much pressure. And I'm not surprised that my brain was just like, no, like, we, we don't want to do this. And I just ignored that entirely.

And I kept doing that career. Until you know, a year and a half in I was like, I might read hemorrhage. Like I might re-stroke here, because I wasn't there was no real fear of that happening. But it was like this, like psychological, like, I might seriously have health problems. If I continue this career, you know, and there will be days days, so many days, when I would not eat anything, I would like make my little yogurt with my little like granola and like food, you know, like little fruit on it. And I would just it would just go on my teachers desk, just sit there. Because I would just be running around teaching helping kids all day. And then I would see this yogurt and I'm like, Oh my gosh, I didn't eat that. You know, it's like that was just the most unhealthy period of my life. You know? And so when people make those arguments about teachers and how they yada yada, I'm like, No, you don't know, you know, and it's like, I mean, if you spent, you spent one year spent one day in the classroom, you'd probably understand.

Bill 18:17

Yeah, I spent my whole teenage years and 12 years in the classroom doing what you're describing, doing the thing to the teachers and driving them around the bend around the twist. And I'm surprised I didn't come across anyone that had a

stroke while I was at school, at least. And definitely, there were some pitches that were quite ill and quite unwell. And you could tell but you know, we just used to used to take that as a sign to go after them further. And it's just because we're silly teenagers. And we think that that's the cool thing to do, or that's a smart thing to do. And I don't know why.

So accept my apologies on behalf of old teenagers from my era, and teenagers, since then and after them. So you are an interesting person because of what you've been through. But also you started out being completely selfless and putting all of your time and effort into caring for other people. So when you hemorrhaged and when you had a bleed, how did that affect you and your mindset about what was going on in your life and where your focus was and where your loyalty was, I suppose. Because I feel like Mimi didn't get any, any love during that time from herself.

Mimi 19:56

Yeah, none.

Mimi 19:59

Negative, negative. Yeah. So when this happened, I was honestly just shocked, you know, and I was angry. Because my whole life, I wanted to be a teacher. And here's this thing that's stopping me. That's totally random. That doesn't make any sense to me, which now that I think about, it's like, yeah, your body was like, You think you're going to do that. That's not what you're gonna do. But I was just angry that people my age, no friends, my age, were getting married, and they were going to grad school, and they were getting their first big kid jobs.

Mimi 20:36

And I was too, you know, I was supposed to be doing that. And then I had this, you know, brain bleed. And I'm like, well, this is lame. Like, I'm, I'm young, I'm supposed to be like, starting out my adult now like, the beginning of it. And I've already like failed. You know, so there, there was a lot of feelings of like, anger towards that. But really, I wanted to get back, I wanted to be in the classroom, I wanted to have that purpose. You know, I could see that I could be good at it. I had that, like, life I'd spent in the classroom, like just kind of preparing for this moment. You know, I felt like, this is my purpose to be a teacher, and that this little annoying interruption was, you know, just something that I was like, Okay, well, I just have to do this.

And I really still did not have any love for myself at this moment. You know, I didn't really realize what was happening to me, and that it was really crazy. And that I should be nurturing myself and caring for myself. It was just kind of all about getting back to normal, you know, getting back to this life that I I saw a glimpse of, and so desperately wanted to make true, you know. And so it happened so quickly to, you know, with my body changing the way that it did. It was like, it's taken me years to even understand, you know, what, what I went through? And so what the terms of like, my,

Bill 22:16

I was gonna say, What do you feel like you went through now? Now what do you feel like you went through?

A Miracle

Mimi 22:24

I think I'm miracle, I think I'm a walking miracle. Because I got so lucky with where it was in my brain. What happens? The timeline of it, you know, the fact that it wasn't an area of my brain, that I could really learn everything. And I'm very, very minimally impacted by it today, it didn't change the way I walk, it doesn't, I mean you can tell when I'm really tired, you know, but the symptoms I have now are so, so small. And and it's incredible. Because when I think about what happened in there, and how it completely could have wrecked these cells, it was really because it was inside of that little cavern. It was it was never told to me that it was a tumor.

But you know, it was it was yes, there's a clump. And it's swelling the tissue around it. And so when it did that, once they took it out, and they put me on, you know, steroids and they did all the rehab, the swelling went down. And so the brain went back to what it did. It didn't kill any cells, you know, I, I can move my hands I can walk I can see it's just, it blows my mind every every time I really think about it, because I know so many survivors now. And they don't walk like me. They don't talk like me. You know, it's like, it's, it's crazy when I think about how lucky I got. And just is just, it's just amazing. Yeah,

Bill 24:02

yeah, you hit the jackpot. And so did I've got numbness on my left side. And when

I walk when I get tired or walk a little bit funny, but you can hardly notice it, most people won't see it. And I can type and all those things. Because exactly like you said, and they took it out and it's not going to happen again. It was in a part of the brain where before they took it out, everything that I lost came back speech, my ability to drive, you know, finished sentences. comprehend it a book, write something, everything came back. And I was very blessed. It was, it was a long time, it took three years to get to surgery almost. And it's been ongoing since then. And I still feel like I'm in constant recovery.

And I've got to look after my body and do all that kind of thing. And now that I'm interviewing stroke survivors, and I've done I think it's somewhere around at least 30 interviews with stroke survivors. It's it, I also feel like I was just extremely lucky. And I know, I don't want to get into the god topic. It doesn't make me feel like God looked after me or anything. It's just random in with regards to where where it was as opposed to somebody else. But some of the other stroke survivors had had the same thing that we've had. But they had it in the brainstem.

So when a bled, it blood, and it caused catastrophic damage, and the recovery has been a lot more dramatic. And the condition they live with is a lot more dramatic. And I don't know about you, but I had this and I've spoken about in the last few episodes, I had this thought that came into my mind just recently because I feel this numbness and spasticity but you can't see it because it's not dramatic. I had this first thought, for the first time of I never looked at a person in a wheelchair and thought there was anything wrong with them, other than the fact that they can't walk. It never occurred to me that they could be something else going on, that constantly bugs them causes them problems, you know, makes them have a bad day, not just the fact that they can't walk or are there it doesn't work properly. It actually has a physical response as well. Were you completely naive like I was even though you were half my age?

Mimi 26:35

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And I also just didn't understand what it meant to be disabled. Like, I mean, no one really does until they are right. But it was just this, like, I was training for a half marathon. I was a former like athlete, like a hockey player. And I just it didn't really register with me that I would need to be in a wheelchair. And so when that was happening to me, I mean, I swear it, my, my nurses and therapists almost put a baby monitor in my room because they were like, you're not allowed to walk on your own. We don't know why you keep getting

out of the bed.

And we don't know why I keep like, you know, wandering around, just like, videos of me like shuffling around my room like watering plants, you know, and like doing all these things. And they're like, you can't do that, you know, like, you're not able to do that on your own. And I just kept doing it. And so so the question was, whether or not I've ever thought about

Bill 27:43

it, it's a rhetorical question

Mimi 27:45

something else wrong.

Bill 27:45

Yeah. rhetorical question. I know you didn't. But it's just one of those things that I've been reflecting on the last few weeks. And I just find that amazing that we, we're so oblivious. And it's this thing, if people listening to this, or watching this, and they come into these episodes regularly, and they've heard this for the third time, and I'm repeating myself, it's the reason I'm doing is because I want to raise awareness of the fact that the guy, the gal in a wheelchair, is not just someone who can walk, there's so much going on underneath, that we can't see that we're oblivious to.

And we feel sorry for them for the fact that they can't walk. And I'm not. I don't know if feeling sorry for them is the right thing for us to be doing. But nonetheless, you know, that's what we think about. But there's so much more going on, because now I've been traumatized and most other people have been traumatized by the stroke they've had, have you experienced some trauma that's still with you that you're dealing with? How did you go with that part of the stroke?

Invisible Disability

Mimi 28:49

Yeah, and I want to add to that to what you said about, you know, the wheelchair, the person in the wheelchair, because we know now there's so many of us survivors who can walk and who look normal, quote, unquote, normal. And we're

walking around, and we have problems. And it really is invisible disability. Because people don't understand. They will never understand it unless they're going through it. And they're like, yes, this is because this is because of this. It's all about what's in my brain and no one can, you can't see it. There's no cast. You know, there's no indicators. We don't have labels. We don't have this sticker on her forehead that says I broke my brain, you know, like, we don't have that.

So it is it is truly invisible. In terms of the trauma, it's been a lot of the emotional after effects of you know, this real quick thing happened to me when I was very young. And then I recovered and just kind of, you know, continued my course, and just kind of kept barreling through my life as normal. Because I could because I had that privilege because I was completely now abled to do that. And there's barreling through barreling through barreling through, and then not really taking a second to be like, Hey, are you okay? Like, you know, that was really scary, right? Like, you know, that was really hard. And writing the book was a form of like, therapy. For me.

It was, it was, it was terrifically awful, you know, writing it, because it was so painful to go through all these things again, and for my family to even like, recounted again, and re you know, relive it again. And that was really hard for all of us. Because it's so traumatic, you know, and it's, you know, the moment that it's something I talked about on stage now to is the moment that they told me that, you know, you're and they didn't even tell me they told my mom is my mom, I was in the ER with her. And they said your daughter's brains bleeding. And when that happened, I didn't know I thought I was gonna die right there. I was just gonna like collapse. And I was like, Okay, great. I have like five seconds to live. Awesome. It's been great.

What? And I started having these, like, chills and convulsions. And I was having a full on panic attack. Without knowing that that's what was happening. My mom was putting blankets on me. And I call her like a magician. I'm like, where'd you get the blankets? Like, she just put his blankets on me? She's like, You're okay, you're okay. And I was like, not okay, I moms I know, I love I love my mom. And, you know, she's just covered me with this blankets. And that was so scary. And, you know, they remember their side of it, too, was my mom called my dad. And she said, like her brains bleeding. Just we didn't have any other information. We didn't know I was stable. We didn't know what it looked like in there. We just knew I was gonna die. That's all we knew was just, it's bleeding. Okay, that's it.

That's all we have. And I swear, he drove a million miles an hour down the highway. It's like he was there in an instant. I mean, I had no sense of time, I was, you know, under blankets shaking. But she called him he just got in the car. And as far as he was convinced that could have been the last year he could have missed me,

Bill 32:06

wow,

Mimi 32:07

I could have died right there, you know, so he just was flying down the highway. My poor, like, siblings just kind of didn't even know what was going on. Like, my little brother was just like, at home. He's like, 19, you know, and like, my dad just got in the car and left, he just like, I gotta bye. Like, we just got to go. And there was just wasn't any information. And so that, like, you know, they'll never we will never forget, that will never let that doesn't just, like go away. Everyone else and especially for families and for parents it. Yeah, and, and that left a, you know, mark on us. And to this day, it's, it's hard for them to, for me to not be home for me to not be where they can see me and keep track and see that I'm okay. You know,

and so, yeah, just tons of things that I still need to work through, and need to go to, you know, not just physical therapy, although I would love to get, you know, some more of that continuously, but really, like the emotional trauma of trying to just work through that, that was hard that that was something that I will that will continue to define me. You know, and not in a negative way, per se, but just that it happened and that it's something that has left, you know, a scar, you know,

Bill 33:32

we had a interesting family, like, we have interesting family we are greek our families very, over the top, smothering and you know, at 44, I still don't know how to tie my shoelaces, because my mom will do for me if she notices, you know. So when I was diagnosed at 37, the same way, it was a Saturday morning, and we had to ring them and I told my wife to ring them. I think I told my wife, or did I ring them. And anyway, the story was, there's something going on, we don't really know what it is, it might be a little bit of blood bleeding in the brain. And everything's okay, though.

So when you can just come to the hospital. And when they came to the hospital, my dad came in an ambulance. So he was in his 70s, early 70s. And he came in an ambulance because when he found out the news, he freaked out, forgot to take one of his medication tablets, I think it was for high blood pressure or something like that. And he collapsed and fell in the yard and hit his head. And my mom,

Mimi 34:46

oh my gosh, now

The Stress On Our Loved Ones

Bill 34:47

my mom cant lift him because he was double what she weighs. And she called the ambulance. And the ambulance brought him to the same hospital I was at. My mom came up to see me. So where's dead? She said, Well, he's downstairs. I said. What do you mean? His dad says? Well, how are you? By the way you okay? I said she saw me talking and upright, and etc. So she was confused and relieved that it was all strange. And then she said when your dad, collapsed and hit his head, and I had to bring him with the, with the ambulance.

And I was like, okay, so where is he? How is he? What's going on with him. So we walked down the four flights of stairs. Sorry I beg your pardon went down the lift, it was on the fourth floor, he was on the first floor, we went down. And I went and saw him in bed on, you know, connected to tubes and all that kind of stuff to get him stabilized. So that he can, so that he can be at hospital for me. And it was like that what happened. And he felt so bad that one the one time in his life for his son needed him. He couldn't be there the way that he wanted to be there.

It's traumatizing to this day for sure. And that was that. So three years later, and after surgery. Unfortunately, my wife lost her mum, the week, two weeks before my surgery. So we buried my mother in law.

Mimi 36:26

Wow.

Bill 36:27

And then we went to surgery for me. And now my wife is completely traumatized from all of the events of the last three years. Not To make matters worse, her

mom passes away couple of weeks before I go into surgery during the funeral. I'm not allowed to be a pallbearer. You know, we have to make sure we keep everything calm and relaxed, because I've had the third bleed only, only a week before she passed away. And now they're expecting it to bleed against, so they really want to get in there quickly and resolve it. And when we went to surgery, and I came out of surgery, and I was in recovery. I think the first night or the second night my wife came to visit. And she was feeling faint. And she collapsed while sitting on a chair. She couldn't get up. She couldn't bring herself to get up and rouse herself she was falling over. I had to tell somebody, I don't know who it was one of my friends go and get a nurse because she's collapsing.

We need somebody to help her. So they had to get her and run some tests on her and find out what was wrong with her. So they had her down in one of the emergency wards in the ER, or you guys called the ER. And she was connected to the heart monitors, and she had drips in her. And they had, they just run a barrage of tests on her as well. And I've been wheeled into her room with my hole in my head just patched up and covered. And the doctor that did the surgery on me my surgeon, one of them walks past. And you know how people just look into wards and they just do that.

And he does that and he keeps walking and then it takes a step back and he looks back and he goes, What's going on? what the hell's going on? Why is she in here? I said I don't know she collapsed. And they're running tests on it to say what's wrong with her. So the stress of all of that those events, especially him, and that was me in hospital now with surgery, the last straw. She was low in fluids and magnesium and I don't know what else what else and they had to stabilize. And it was really, really dramatic.

You want to, those people want to be there for you. They want to support you, and they don't know how, they can't. And the worst thing that can happen to them is this spouse potentially passing away or their child passing away. And it's just the worst thing. So your dad and your family, for sure. They're traumatized. And they may not speak about it. But it's probably causes anxiety, and it probably causes them to respond in ways that they didn't before your episode. And we all need healing. We all need care. We all need counselling, we all need hugs. We all need to tell everybody, we love them. And I don't know about you. But I suppose I should ask you I tell everyone, I love them so much more than I did before my mom and dad, they get a hug and a kiss still, every time I say them and go. What

are you like?

Nothing Left In The Tank



Mimi 39:41

Yeah, I really gained a ton of perspective on these people. And it actually it's, it's really cute. The first thing people usually tell me after they read the book is like, your parents are amazing. And I'm like, Yeah, I know. Like, they're great. They're, they're exceptional people. And they're the

reason why I'm alive. And so I I know that about them. And it really it did strengthen our relationship, because I knew that they would do anything for me, and that they were always on my team. And that in itself is a privilege. Because, you know, some people's families are not that way. Or they you know, we still have struggles, you know, there was still times when, you know, I remember when I first started teaching, and I was living at home, and I you know just recovered. So isn't that first year post surgery.

And I would come home to my parents house after teaching all day. And I was exhausted. And I didn't want to talk to anybody. And I just wanted to go in my room and sleep, you know, and just pass out and then just have someone maybe make me food. But I didn't really care about anything, I was just so zonked out. And we were in the kitchen. And, you know, the TV was on. And we were having dinner, and I was like, Can you turn the TV off, please. And maybe I said it in a way that was like, I snapped or something, I was just like, you gotta turn the TV off, I can't, like, I can't eat, and think and have the TV on. That's just too many things.

You know, and, and it was just, I had to explain to my dad, I was just like, this, I'm not trying to be cruel, I'm not trying to be a certain way. I just can't process the sounds and I just can't, you know, if I'm being avoidant, if I'm coming home, I'm not talking to you. Don't take that personally, you know, and I know you will, because you care about me and you want to like be around me and all these things. But I had to start putting up some boundaries and just saying this is what I need. And it was tough, it was really hard because I was different.

And while I had been able to, you know, to maintain a lot of my me-ness, and I kind of elevated now I'm kind of an elevated version of myself, you know, I'm really interesting, and what I'm doing and all this, but it really, it really changed me, it changed me a lot in a lot of ways. And so that's difficult for a family to deal with. And to come to terms and well, well you look fine? How come? You're not fine? You know, you look you look quote unquote, normal, you look like, how come you are sleeping so much? or How come you're just going up to your room and you're just not talking to anybody? It's like, I just can't I just can't explain it. That how I feel,

Bill 42:31

yeah, this is gonna feel like nothing in the tank, that's it's all gone. Because that's what I get, I get like, there's nothing left, I have zero more to give, I've got to stop giving. I'm just going to stop. I have teenagers. So my my youngest is 18. And my oldest is 22. So they were teenagers through the whole time that I was going through this. And it was extremely difficult to get them to grasp the concept of please stop, please don't just this, the simple little requests just couldn't, they just couldn't grasp in it. How could they you don't want them to really because they are, the only way they're going to work that out is to be in your shoes. So the best thing for them for you to do is communicate and hopefully get the message across. And it sounds like that's what you tried to do.

Mimi 43:39

Mm hmm. Yeah. But really, I mean, I wish that my parents would have been able to go to a support group, you know, for parents of survivors. Well, and there are groups like that out there, you know, there are because we're realizing like these care givers, these people that are impacted by these things, they have needs, and they have trauma, and they have things they need to work through. And you know, it's and I thought about this to like, because now I do a lot of like public speaking. And I did. Part of my like book tour was I went to the brain injury alliance of Colorado.

So I went and what came back to Colorado, and I did this keynote. And my mom who's a school psychologist actually signed up for the conference to go to the conference as a worker, you know, so she actually was able to see my keynote. And she's sitting in the back. And that's like, a lunchtime keynote. And so like, people are like eating their sandwiches, and I'm like, Hey, what's good, let's talk about my brain bleed, you know, and I get into my talk, and I'm just literally

thinking about her. And how crazy this must be for to be sitting in a big audience of like, 200 people. And they have four daughters talk about how she almost died. And bring it all back up again.

And, you know, and to see me doing that, and I was just like, wow, that would be hard. That would be so hard for her. And I mean, she deals with it like a champ. You know, she's, of course very proud of what I've accomplished and what I'm doing. And so it's always like, Oh, yeah, this is my daughter. And yeah, this is our book, and, but she also does the thing to where she sees someone, she'll literally pull my scar out. So literally be like, yeah, look at it, and she'll like move my hair and she'll be like, look, look, look, look. And I'm like, Mom, where the grocery store like you can't like, you're going to scare people, you know. But I think part of it too, is her part of her processing. You know, and, and coping through it. And maybe that helps her in some ways to, okay, look, see there's a scar she healed? She's okay. You know, but also she has to sit there and hear me talk about it all the time

Bill 46:03

yeah

Mimi 46:03

when I'm sure it's like she just wants to just not hear that. You know, anymore.

Everyone is Over It

Bill 46:10

Yeah, my wife's pretty much over me talking about it, I think. So that's why I created a podcast. Maybe if she every gets curious and some of the episodes. The name of the episode gets a curiosity. she'll listen. But she tries not to. I'm pretty sure she hasn't listened to one episode. And I don't blame her. But if she wants to she can. And sometimes we talk about the guests that I've had on. And I'll talk about what they went through and how amazing they are and what they've overcome and how they're going really well now.

So she likes to hear those stories. But she would rather move forward and focus on what's coming rather than what's happened in the past. And I don't talk about it, because I want to dwell on the past. I want to talk about it because there's a need for us to talk about it, like you said, there's a need for support groups is also

need for talking need for stories being shared. And for me, it's my therapy, as well as hopefully, at the same time, the person on the other end of the camera is receiving some free therapy as well for an hour.

You know, so that's why I do it. And I know that as a carer, my wife became a carer overnight, like your mom and dad did. And they never dealt with stroke. They didn't know what stroke is about. And they don't know how to help somebody. Doctors and nurses go to school for years and years to care for patients for different types of problems and loved ones of spouses, they just wake up in the morning one day and their care. And that's about all the support that they get. And that's not enough. That's just crazy.

So I hope the carers will find this. And they'll listen to this episode, and the other episodes and they'll be able to get a feeling for Okay, there are things that I can do. There are things now that I understand, because I've listened to all these stories, maybe they're going to say, maybe I can reach out to person x on the other side of the world via an email, Instagram, whatever. And maybe that can help them a little bit, right, because that's why you write the book, isn't it because it was cathartic to you. But also you're hoping to raise awareness? Am I right?

Mimi 48:42

Yeah. And I I was blown away by there was I'm still blown away by the response. I honestly I thought it was going to be the opposite. I thought that brain injury people would come to me in a bad way. You would come at me and say like, how dare you like you're not brain injured enough? Like you look total? I can't I can't tell you where this came from

Bill 49:06

came from the same place my one came from. So yeah, because you're kind of, like, inadequate, like I didn't, I'm not injured enough. I didn't bleed enough. Or I didn't have enough deficits. I get it. .

Mimi 49:20

And I totally thought people were going to be like, Who is she thinks she is trying to speak for these people. Like she's not disabled? Like what oh she? She thinks she wants a handicapped parking spot, like, Oh my god, she's so offensive. And you know, and it's been the opposite. It's been the opposite. You know, people like you reaching out like someone from Tampa Bay, Florida called me yesterday just

called me out of the blue from a hospital, some nurse who says that she is trying to get the hospital to get me to come and speak there. And I'm like, how did you find me? You know, it's like, it's like, what's that,

Bill 49:56

you have a book, that's how they found you

Mimi 50:00

But it's still it's still blows my mind because it's like, it's still it's a small publication. It's like, you know, it's it is internationally distributed. But it's like, when I go to the Barnes and Noble, it's on the bottom shelf. And it's in the health section, which, you know, I guess I kind of thought is going to be in the memoir section, but it's actually it's for good reason. It's in the medical health section. And it's in between, like, migraines and like heart attacks. And like, you know, these like self, you know, and also like textbooks, you know, and then you pull out my book and you're just kind of like, oh, okay, you know, it's like, how do people find it? I mean, I I know that there's forces that I don't see. And there's, you know, marketing and even people are starting to, like, fan post about my stuff. And I'm still like, what I have fans, like, That's insane.

Bill 50:49

I'm a fan. I haven't read it yet, but I'm gonna get a copy.

Mimi 50:53

Yeah,

About The Book

Bill 50:55

it's great. So tell me about it. They like Tell me about the structure of it. What can people expect from it? Because already I look at it and go, Well, this is one crazy gal like, Oh, she's talking about a hole in her head. I can relate to that straight away. So

Mimi 51:09

yeah,

Bill 51:10

it looks quite thick. So even though your brain was a little bit frazzled, you managed to get a quite a thick book out. Tell me how, what it's about, like, I'm excited to hear about it.

Mimi 51:21

Yeah, so to be honest, this started out as a bunch of rantings after learning that my, you know, after being at home for a month, and not being able to walk anymore.

So that started out as complete denial complete, like, this is a funny thing that's happened to me, this is hilarious, can't walk, and I can't taste and I probably won't be able to see. And it started out as this kind of like, comedic, release. And I just started typing. And then throughout the years, it became clear to me, this wasn't just a joke. This was a real story. To find the story, even live the story, I had to kind of simplify it, pull it apart, I had to think, Okay, what are you trying to say, Oh, you went through this thing. But during it, you lack a lot of self love. And part of that came from, you know, being this long term relationship.

So the first part of the book kind of deals with the breakup, and how that kind of that trauma, like bled into the brain situation, and how they there were these two very big things that happened in my life at a very young, pivotal age. And how I just had to heal both of them, like simultaneously. And I went about that in a lot of interesting ways. And, you know, before the brain exploded, it was a lot of blind dates. It was a lot of like, Okay, I gotta find myself, Oh, yeah, I gotta be with it. I gotta be with the guy, you know, I got to be with the guy because I don't know who I am. Because I was just in a five year long relationship that I thought I was gonna, like, marry this guy. And so like, I gotta like, figure out who's gonna be the other person to love me, you know, because I wasn't willing to do it myself.

So I was like, Oh, no, someone else needs to love me. Okay. And so I went on all these like, ridiculous dates, and just crazy, crazy people. And, and then I got into teaching, and was just kind of ready. I'm like, okay, day five, you know? And then just body was like, Nah, you're done. You're done. tapping out, we're done. And it kind of follows my journey through both of those traumas. And through the healing process, through the hospitals through the crazy people I met in the hospitals, rehab and the trauma of relearning how to walk again, when you're a 22 year old, who thinks she's gonna run a half marathon in two weeks.

And eventually, I get back to the classroom, and I kind of decide that I'm going to love me is my big thing. And I still struggle with that. But every time I like reread the book, I'm like, Oh, yes, I'm going to love myself. This is so great. Because I really realized, like, what I have been through, you know, reading the story, and of course, I wrote it, so I know it but when you kind of see it in that finished form, it's it's very cathartic to read the book that you wrote, that's printed out, and the other people are seeing it too. And they can validate you.

And yeah, I love it when my friends or you know, people that read the book, when they call me on the phone, and they talk about how much they loved it. It feels really good. It's like, Oh, yeah, well, then they also kind of come back with this, like, guilt. So interesting. Because I was in such denial. I didn't really tell anybody what I was actually going through. Now that people are reading the book, my friends, my close friends are like, Oh, my God, I'm so sorry. Wasn't there for you? Oh, my God, I'm so sorry. I should have flown out to I didn't know you were going to die. You did say that. I was like, Yeah, of course. I didn't say that. Like, don't worry, I'm not mad. Like, I'm not mad, like I was in denial. Of course, I didn't tell you how it actually was. Because I didn't know myself, you know?

Bill 55:26

How could you?

Mimi 55:27

So, Yeah,

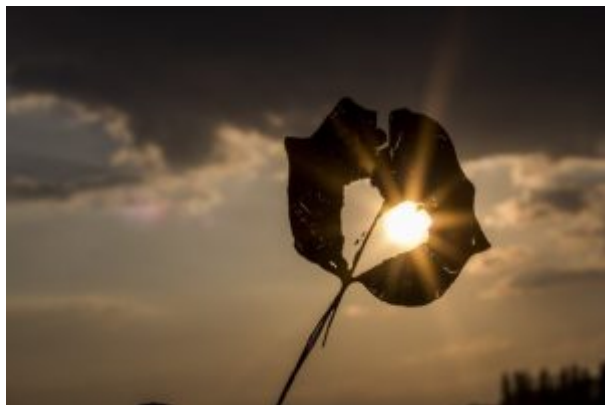
Bill 55:29

I um. self love is really important. And it's come up a couple of times in other interviews as well. And people neglect themselves, and then they hard on themselves. And then they look at themselves differently. Because some of them change physically, they look different physically, because of spacticity, and because of the face drooping and that type of thing. So it's a big issue. And I think if if you do that first, then what happens is, then you allow for other people to love you, and you allow for other people to come into your life and be caring and be loving. So because people see that when you're being caring and loving, they see that so they allow you, there don't lose you there for a second.

Mimi 56:23

No, I'm still here. Can you hear me?

I Have A Heart?



Bill 56:24

Yeah, I thought I lost you made it sound like I lost you, that's ok we are good. So when you can, you can be when you can be loving of yourself. That's what I think where the real healing starts. And that's where I would suggest people start and it could be hard for some people to do that.

But I think that's really where where happens for me, I'm 44. And I didn't know what self love was until after 37. And after the first bleed. So you know, it could take a lifetime for some people to get there. And for me, I'm thankful. I'm thankful for the fact that the bleed occurred when it did, how it all has turned out. Let's be honest, I'm not thankful that our bled in the brain, but I'm thankful that it worked out the way that it did.

But that it switched my brain off for quite a while, which meant my heart had to kick in and take over from a person who would have described himself as a head case back then. So I'm no longer a head case, the head can't do the amount of things that it was doing before because it's physically altered as well. So like yours is because something is not there anymore. And when you when we overdo it, it tells us it says, hey, you're done for today, you're not doing anything else.

So I can't go through those thinking processes like I used to before because my brain just switches off earlier on in the day and goes, you're done. That's it no more for you. So I don't do it. And now my default is to just go to the heart. And that's where self love happens. And we love other people happens and we love for my community now happens and we love for my podcast happens and where the passion comes from and why I take action, doing things that I love, because I don't do the overthinking anymore, it just doesn't work.

So maybe you can relate to that. And as you continue your journey. Be grateful and surprised and joyful and happy that you're getting the amazing feedback that you're getting. Because that's going to make you do it more. And the more you do it I dont mind, if you get addicted to that, the more you do it, the more good you're going to do for the community and for the people that need to hear your

story and Other Stories like them. So that's, you know, definitely allow yourself to go to that space and to and to do that and what's not to like about you, some bloke will come along and he'll go that's my chick.

Mimi 59:00

Oh, yeah, he's, I know, he's out there somewhere. I really am. I think this time right now has been so important for me to not be with someone. And because I really, I have to break apart what it is I love about myself. And like on Valentine's Day, I did this like fun little like self love post. Because, you know, a lot of people on Valentine's Day, you know, post their, their spouses, or their boyfriends and girlfriends. And, you know, I just did a bunch of like, posts on my Instagram story of things I love about me. And I was like, Hey, I love that I like cry when a friend like sends me a letter and I have a picture of be like crying. And then I have a picture of me like what my little tiny feet and I'm like, I love that my feet are so small, that's so adorable.

And I love that like, you know, I'm I'm so funny, and I do comedy, and I love that my hair is curly, and I just was like going on this kind of like, train. And I really want that to be a daily practice. Unfortunately, it's still not, I'm not quite there yet, I'm getting a lot better at identifying those negative thoughts about myself,

Bill 1:00:05

it's a process.

Mimi 1:00:07

It's a process, it's, you know, it's something that we, like you said, can spend our entire lives, not even being aware that we need to be, you know, self loving, but the more that I'm meditating and reflecting and trying to take care of myself, you know, taking care of my body is self love. And that was that's still the biggest hurdle that I have is you know that that just from something my personality, just always on the go, my body gets left behind. I didn't eat the yoghurt on the counter when I was teaching, you know, I don't drink enough water, you know, I am not, I'm inconsistent with my exercise,

I'll either run in half marathon, and then I won't run for two weeks. You know, that's what is that about? You know, that's not healthy. You know? So it's like, I need to get on this consistency. You know, taking care of your body is self love. And it's really hard to do that alone. But also, you're you have this whole

community of people who are like, yeah, you know what I do for that I meditate every day, or you know what I do for that I, I go on a walk or you know, there's like so many people that are doing things to actively practice self love, that we can learn, we can learn from those people. And that's kind of what I hope to do as well, when I'm traveling and speaking to people is to like, hear their stories and learn about what they're doing. Because I can learn from those things, too. You know,

Bill 1:01:33

yeah. And what you'll find is, if you I think about it, like in seasons, winter is not the season for me to be exercising, Summer is the season for me to be exercising, I don't like winter. Everything that comes and goes it's just like a season where you're going to put some time and effort into a book, I imagine you require a certain amount of effort and energy. And so certain things fall by the wayside. And that's okay. Just acknowledging that and being okay, that you don't do those things all the time, even that self love, just don't be hard on yourself for that. Just know that whenever you feel like it, you're going to do that.

And you don't have to be so dramatically regimented in the tasks that you do, because that's when really you show self love yourself. You also show self love when you decide you're doing nothing all day for the whole day. And maybe the next day. That's also self love, because you're relaxing, and you're doing calming things, or you're just not being busy. So that's really important to do as well, I got to the point where at 44, I was interviewed for a podcast a few weeks ago. And the question I was asked at the end was, who do you look up to that's helped you overcome and get better those types of that sort of question. And I said, Actually, I thought about it for not very long at all. And I said, Actually, the person who I look up to who I really appreciate the most right now is me.

And the guy who interviewed me was blown away. The podcast was called the positive impact podcast, I believe, I'm going to be sharing the link on the on my podcast, I'll be sharing that episode. We recorded it in two parts. And he was really amazed that I said that. And I had to make sure that I said, obviously, there is other people around me that supported me over all these years to get to this point. But I've done the work, I've actually put in the effort, I have changed my diet, I have changed my attitude, I've changed my behaviors, I've changed so many things I have really taken it on board and become the person who's responsible for my own recovery.

I am the guy who I look up to because that's somebody that I'd never been before. I'd never done that before. And now I am so I'm really wrapped. So you will get there. And me and even me, he loves myself, that doesn't make me the perfect stroke survivor. I still have my shitty days and I still misbehave and I still act up and I still do the wrong things. And I still push myself too far so it's all good.

Don't Be Hard On Your Self

Mimi 1:04:33

Yeah, it's, I think also having, you know, mercy on yourself. You know, because I, I can't believe how hard I've been on myself in my life. Despite what I've been through, you know, and especially with like my body, and you know, all the weight loss and weight gain that happened in that time period. for good reason,

what, like, you know, no one else is thinking that first of all, all you're a strong survivor, you are walking, you're talking you are doing all these things. And that, you know, critical.

But we do we're human that way. And we all do it.

So I think the easiest thing is to just have some mercy and grace and just every once in a while just check in just have a mental check in. I think it's hard. I think it's especially hard when you've been through what some of us have been through because from the outside, people could go oh my gosh, how could you ever look at you look like what you're what you've accomplished, look at what you're doing. But we're just like anybody else we have days when we don't, you know, don't see any purpose or any find any meaning or, you know, we're stressed about something that is so trivial and so small.

You know, that's that's life sometimes, but we have the added triumphs, and the added like history that we have that that's why when people kind of are like, oh, like don't dwell on like, I'm not dwelling like, I'm using this, this is my stuff. This is my history, like this matters to me. It makes me who I am today. So do I sit there and think about it every day and get myself down about what? No, of course I don't. But don't tell me not to dwell cuz like, no, this matters. This. This is me. This is my history. You know.

Bill 1:07:14

I love what you're doing. You've got a really quirky cup there to tell me about the cup.

Mimi 1:07:20

Oh, yeah. I just bought this from the internet. Because I wanted a new mug. And it's got a bunch of really fun like, anatomical like brains on it. And so I have my tea or my coffee in the morning. And it just I like I surround myself with like, I have all these like, brain things around my you know, little home office here. Like, you know, I've got my podcast stuff is also kind of scattered around and it's just kind of my little brainy space. So I like to fill it with Brain Stuff

Bill 1:07:57

brilliant

Mimi 1:07:59

oh there is pencils too

Bill 1:08:00

with brains on them

Mimi 1:08:02

Yes.

Bill 1:08:08

That's hilarious.

Mimi 1:08:10

It's like I guess it's an eraser. I think I've never actually tried to use it.

Bill 1:08:14

You're really embracing

Mimi 1:08:15

for my show

Bill 1:08:16

you are really embracing it

Mimi 1:08:19

It's a brand, brain injuries or a brand.

Bill 1:08:22

Yeah, why not? I love it. Tell me about where people can go and find a little bit more about you. Mimi.

Mimi 1:08:31

Well, I have a website. MimiHayes.com. I'm on all the social media. I'm on Instagram @MimiHayesBrain. Because you know, brains. And I have a podcast, Mimi and the brain. And it is also a fun. Yes.

Clever. I know.

Bill 1:08:59

Man. That's so good.

Mimi 1:09:02

Yeah, so uh, Mimi and the brain. I interview neurologists and psychologists and brain scientists about the brain. And I bring in my own like, funny brain questions. I kind of slide in some questions about my own brain. They're always very tailored to their research and their specific research. So I'm actually working on a creativity episode right now. So yeah, Mimi And The Brain.

And the book is called, I'll be okay. It's just the whole of my head. There is an audio book now to a lot of survivors who are having trouble reading. There's actually an audio book now on Audible. It's not read by my voice, unfortunately, but the gal who narrates it is fabulous. So I'm really looking forward to sharing everything with anyone who still doesn't know that I'm out here. And hoping to just gather more friends and survivors and keep doing the work that I'm doing.

Bill 1:10:03

Brilliant. I'm looking forward to getting the book now that it's an audio book, especially because I love audio books. And I don't do well with reading books. My brain gets too hot and I get tired and I can't do it and I never finished them. Mimi and the brain and you guys taking over the world?

Mimi 1:10:23

Hopefully we'll see. I mean, I'm starting with just the brain scientists but they've got a lot of knowledge. So maybe we will maybe we will take over.

Bill 1:10:33

Excellent. Mimi on that note thank you so much for being on the podcast

Intro 1:10:37

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