

New Book About Stroke Recovery with Ten Tools For Recovery and Personal Transformation | Bill Gasiamis

Bill Gasiamis recently published his book about stroke recovery, this is his book review.

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Bill Gasiamis 0:00

Hello, everybody. Welcome to the recovery after stroke podcast and welcome to 2024. Hope this year is a good one. It is full of recovery learning new things and overcoming big challenges.

Bill Gasiamis 0:15

This is episode 284 and to kick off the new year, I will summarize my new book *The Unexpected Way that a Stroke Became the Best Thing That Happened*. Hopefully, the insights you will get will encourage you to grab a copy and start making some small changes in the way you're going about your recovery to get massive results.

Bill Gasiamis 0:36

So let's get started. So the aim here is to just get you moving beyond the crazy title that I've selected. The reason I've selected this title is because this is the title of the way the book came to be. So the title must fit the story behind how the book came to be.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00

And now, it's already been controversial this title. And it's not because it says something controversial, but it gets misinterpreted as being controversial. And that is because I had some feedback from people, especially after I posted about it for the very first time telling people that the book was live.

Bill Gasiamis 1:20

I had some feedback that said that I am promoting stroke as something to experience in life. And of course, that could not be further from the truth. I'm not promoting stroke, what I'm promoting is the opportunities that stroke creates, I'm promoting looking for things that come after the stroke because of the stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 1:44

And as a result of that, those things that come up, you'll be able to use and implement to make your recovery better. Now, I am not saying that stroke was the best thing that happened to me when it happened.

Bill Gasiamis 1:58

It took a long time for me to get to that stage to talk about that. Before I got

there, I went through some really difficult times, and so did my family some scary times. And what I don't want to do is just put out information that's about how scary and difficult stroke is.

Bill Gasiamis 2:03

Because there's a never-ending amount of information about how scary and difficult stroke is. But the reality is, there's not enough information about what are the good things that can come from stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 2:30

And it doesn't matter what your deficits are, what matters is that you look for the opportunities to get a win. And then once you grab that opportunity, you run with it, and then something amazing might happen. And this is what's happened to me.

The Forward

Bill Gasiamis 2:44

My stroke has led to the podcast, and it's led to a book. And that's just a couple of the things that are amazing that you should know about. So let me just get straight into it with The Forward. The Forward was written by a friend of mine, Michael Wilkinson.

Bill Gasiamis 3:01

He is somebody who I met back in 2013, and he's been my biggest ally, he's been behind every single thing that I've ever done with recovery after stroke in the background, he gets in touch with me two or three times a year, we meet up one of those times or two of those times.

Bill Gasiamis 3:18

And he just encourages me to go after all of my dreams and desires. Everything that I think about that I want to do with Recovery After Stroke that I'm concerned about. He just says go for it. And he encourages me. And if it wasn't for Michael, a lot of this stuff would not exist.

Bill Gasiamis 3:38

So he came out of nowhere in 2013, we met at a place where I wasn't expecting to take away a 10-year relationship and we got together, and we learned things. We discovered things. We overcame things together in this particular course that we

attended.

Bill Gasiamis 4:01

It was a personal development course. We studied neuro-linguistic programming. And when we left we had a great friendship, we just hit it off. And now he has been the person who I requested to write me forward, and I couldn't think of anybody better.

Bill Gasiamis 4:21

So in The Forward Michael goes through. And basically, he talks a little bit about me, he talks a little bit about the book, and he talks a little bit about how he and I came together. And it's just unbelievable. Thinking back now, after all the time that has passed since 2013, what has come from that is that Michael has written The Forward to my book.

The Preface

Bill Gasiamis 4:52

Next is The Preface and in The Preface, I talk about how my story kind of eventually led to the creation of the Recovery After Stroke podcast and how that podcast made it so that I started to realize that some things that were happening, were unexpected.

Bill Gasiamis 5:13

And I was pleasantly surprised by some of the great things that were happening despite all the difficulties. And the tough times, there was some little nuggets of gold there, that if I paid attention to, and allowed myself to extract, we're going to lead to amazing things.

Bill Gasiamis 5:33

And then I found myself saying that stroke was the best thing that happened to me in a couple of the podcast episodes. And then that is what started this whole thing. Because I wanted to understand how the hell I got to the point of being able to say that a stroke was the best thing that happened to me.

Bill Gasiamis 5:50

And then not only that, but other people were saying that, and I wanted to get to the bottom of that as well. Why are they saying that? How did they get there? And

that's what this book is about this book is the how.

Bill Gasiamis 6:01

How do people get to the point of being able to say that stroke was the best thing that happened to them, move on from the serious life-threatening situation that they were in, and move on from focusing on the deficits and on all the bad stuff that stroke has caused?

Bill Gasiamis 6:19

More importantly, I look for opportunities to make a difference in their own lives to somebody else's lives, to go after the improvements, to change their mindset to change their way of going about life generally, to improve things, even though they are dealing with more deficits and more challenges than they've ever dealt with before.



The Introduction

Bill Gasiamis 6:42

Now, before the first chapter comes the introduction, I opened the introduction with a quote, that goes, nothing is obvious to the uninformed, and that hopefully sets the tone for the entire book, what I'm hoping to do is inform people.

Bill Gasiamis 6:59

And then once I've informed them, that the things that we're talking about in this book become obvious, obvious things to go after, obvious things to implement,

obvious things to improve. And then once people go about that, they begin the process of making small changes and improvements every single day.

Bill Gasiamis 7:23

By the time they get to the end of the next 12 months to January 2025, there'll be a massive difference in the way they feel about their recovery and their life in general, and the way that they have risen to the challenge of stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 7:40

So this book is a little bit different from other books you might have read, it's supposed to be interactive. And I have a section just before we begin the first chapter, which is about filling out, answering some questions that I asked to get people sitting up in their minds, the tone by which they want to approach this book.

Bill Gasiamis 8:02

So it helps people understand what they want to get out of the book. And then it allows you to extract and see that information as you're reading. And it allows you to store the ideas that are important for you to take out of this book.

Bill Gasiamis 8:19

So you might have some specific areas you'd like to improve on. By answering these questions, you will be able to then extract that information from this book. And hopefully, that's going to make a massive difference in what you get out of reading a book.

Bill Gasiamis 8:34

It's not just supposed to be me telling your story is also supposed to be you extracting out of the book, what you need. Answering the questions that I've added at the end of the introduction will enable you to have a better reading experience.

Bill Gasiamis 8:52

Okay, so, chapter one starts with a quote from Stephen Hawking. Stephen Hawking was a physicist who experienced a massive debilitating illness, he had motor neuron disease, and when he was alive, most of his adult life was spent in a wheelchair unable to move any parts of his body.

Bill Gasiamis 9:12

And despite that, he was at the pinnacle of his field. And he was a theoretical physicist, a cosmologist, and an author, and all this guy could move was his eyes. And his quote goes Do not be disabled in spirit as well as physically.

Bill Gasiamis 9:31

And hopefully what that quote does, is give people an insight into where the changes need to come from. So physically disabled might be one thing that you've experienced from a stroke. It may have impacted your vision, it may have been impacted and the way that you walk, and the way you get around you might be in a wheelchair.

Bill Gasiamis 9:53

But Stephen Hawking talks about the idea that you can still achieve All of the things that you'd like to achieve in your life, you just have to have spirit, you should not be disabled in spirit as well as physically because as somebody who is experiencing a physical disability, if you are also disabled in spirit, well, life is going to be much, much harder.

Chapter One: A Stroke Recovery Mindset

Bill Gasiamis 10:17

Chapter one is titled A Stroke Recovery Mindset. And I specifically titled The chapter because I didn't want to call it mindset, picture, mindset, work all of that stuff out, and then everything will be okay.

Bill Gasiamis 10:17

What I wanted to do was make you understand that the stroke recovery mindset was the particular mindset that we needed to have, and needed to work with and implement. It also begins with a story about my stroke experience.

Bill Gasiamis 10:47

My story is titled, From Blaming Others to Accepting Responsibility. And I go into my whole stroke experience and how I had to transform and take responsibility for my recovery, and not leave that up to other people.

Bill Gasiamis 11:03

And that's a difficult thing to have to come to understand because, at the beginning, I did expect that doctors were going to be the ones who are going to

lead my recovery. But in the end, we got to the point where I realized that the doctors had a particular role.

Bill Gasiamis 11:24

But the other part of the recovery that was going to have to happen outside of the hospital was not up to them, it was going to be up to me. So that chapter begins with that story for me. And then I'll talk about what a stroke recovery mindset is.

Bill Gasiamis 11:39

And where a mindset may have been implemented, like the current mindset that you have about things where it might have been implemented from, where it may have come from, has it come from your past? Have you ever thought about forming a recovery mindset? And what that might look like? And what that does do?

Bill Gasiamis 11:58

Or are you just running somebody else's mindset, a story that you've been told, or things that you've heard, that are not necessarily what you want out of life, I talk about the science behind it. And there was an awesome book that I read to prepare for this chapter by Carol Dweck, who is a professor of psychology.

Bill Gasiamis 12:23

And she wrote the book back in 2006, called Mindset. And in that book, there's a whole bunch of insights. And I apply the insights, the things that I learned from that book to stroke recovery. And it's an awesome read.

Bill Gasiamis 12:39

And you'll get a lot of information about how you can understand what your current mindset is like right now, and how you can implement a mindset that is going to be specifically about stroke recovery. Because let's face it, that's what we want right now.

Bill Gasiamis 12:55

We don't want to be distracted by other things. We want to be focused on stroke, recovery, and getting our lives back.

Chapter Two: The Heart Brain

Bill Gasiamis 13:03

Now, chapter two is The Heart Brain. This might be an interesting read for you because it will potentially give you a bit of an insight into how important the heart is with stroke recovery. Now, the heart brain is all about the emotional center of you, your body, and your heart.

Bill Gasiamis 13:25

As a result, I opened the chapter with a quote from Daniel Goleman, Ph., who is the author of the book Emotional Intelligence, which was written in 1996. And the quote goes, “Our emotions guide us to face predicaments and tasks too important to leave to the intellect alone”.

Bill Gasiamis 13:46

And I love that separation immediately from the head, straight down to the heart. So our emotions guide us to face predicaments and tasks too important to leave to the intellect alone. With that, the chapter goes into describing what the heart brain is, what you need to know about the heart brain is that it has neurons, your heart has neurons, and those neurons are similar to the neurons found in the head.

Bill Gasiamis 14:21

The heart is a neural network, and it has intelligence. When we experience a stroke, our emotions are out of control. A lot of people will talk about crying uncontrollably and feeling bad about that. But the way I saw that, when it started happening to me was that my head switched off and my heart switched on. And the book goes into a little bit about a little bit of information about what that means.

Bill Gasiamis 14:49

What does it mean to start noticing your heart and feeling your heart? It talks about why the heart and brain matter and why it matters to be connected to your heart center, especially in recovery. And it also goes into a little bit about what we need to do to let go of emotional traumas that we’re bringing with us to stroke recovery. Or, more importantly, instead of letting go of them, dealing with them and leaving them in the past.

Bill Gasiamis 15:15

So the Heart and Brain are really important parts of recovery, I have specifically chosen the chapter order, in a way so that we deal with things in a way that is going to be most supportive of stroke recovery. But it also specifies in the book that you don't have to do anything that I've read in the order that I've read in it, what you can do is go backward and forwards and choose whatever you're comfortable with, wherever you want to start and start there.

Bill Gasiamis 15:43

But this order, I feel is a really good way to get through to getting to the endpoint of this whole process. And the head brain is the one that we're going to deal with first because that's where the stroke happens. So we've dealt with that in chapter one of Mindset. Now we move on to the heart and brain.

Bill Gasiamis 16:02

And we go through that process of really giving you some information that perhaps you've never heard of before, that it's going to get you curious about what else you need to know about the heart brain, and how that is going to be able to support you in stroke recovery.

Chapter Three: The Gut-Brain

Bill Gasiamis 16:20

All right, now chapter three is called The Gut-Brain. Yep, another brain. We have multiple intelligences in our body.

Bill Gasiamis 16:31

The gut-brain is even more fascinating because it doesn't look anything like the head, brain, or heart, it looks completely different. It's a whole bunch of tubes that go everywhere and do amazing amazing tasks for us. But you might have noticed that after your stroke, you had some gut issues, you had difficulty going to the toilet, you were constipated, and you felt bloating, a lot of stroke survivors report that. And that's because the head and the heart are intimately connected by the gut-brain axis.

Bill Gasiamis 17:01

It's a particular area of study that I'm not 100% familiar with. But there is a massive link in the communication patterns between the head and the gut, they

talk to each other directly. And when the head is impacted by a stroke the gut is also impacted.

Bill Gasiamis 17:20

Learning about the gut and learning about the neurons in the gut and learning that all your neurotransmitters are mostly produced in the gut, things like serotonin and dopamine when you learn that you start to get a better understanding of that you need to take a different role in supporting the gut so that your gut can feel good and be good, and then support your brain.

Bill Gasiamis 17:44

Now, did you know that the gut-brain has about as many neurons as a cat's brain, when I heard that, the way that I interpreted that was that there must be some level of intelligence there. And you know your gut has intelligence.

Bill Gasiamis 18:04

And the reason you know that is because you may have in the past heard somebody or even yourself say things like I followed my gut instinct, or I couldn't swallow that there's a whole bunch of words that we use around the gut that the book goes into, it gives a bit of an insight into how we use the intelligence of the gut to help guide us every single day. And again, when I discovered this, I was fascinated because my head was offline. And now I was able to recruit my heart brain and my gut-brain, to the task of helping me with stroke recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 18:44

Now, the chapter opens with a quote from George Fueschel, who was an early IBM programmer who coined the quote "Garbage in, garbage out." he coined that quote, in the context of the type of programming that you put into a computer would give you certain results. And if it was bad programming, you would get bad results.

Bill Gasiamis 19:09

Well, I've heard "Garbage in, garbage out." be applied to nutrition, and also to the body. So if you're putting stuff in that you shouldn't be putting into your body, then also, you're going to get results from that that is going to make your recovery last, take longer, or be harder to go through. Now, garbage in garbage out with regards to your gut-brain is leading us to the next chapter.

Bill Gasiamis 19:40

But that is how the chapter starts. We learn about what the gut brain is why it matters to know about the gut-brain and why it matters to take care of your gut and to support it in this stroke recovery journey as if you were supporting your brain. And we go into the science and I give a lot of information about the science behind the gut-brain. And then I discussed some of the gut language like I took gutsy action, I trusted my gut, I have butterflies in my stomach.

Bill Gasiamis 20:12

And I give a whole bunch of information on the gut-brain, that you may have already been saying things that you already do hear other people say, that you didn't realize was related to your gut-brain. And I talked about some of the tasks of the gut-brain, which include your identity, it's where your identity is stored. So that identity is impacted massively after a stroke, we can support the way that we identify.

Bill Gasiamis 20:45

By supporting our gut brain, we talk about how the gut brain also does self-preservation. That's what we're talking about. That's where you take action. This chapter ties into chapter one and chapter two, with the fact that if you use the right mindset, and you're able to deal with your emotions, you're able to take action in certain areas of your life and make changes and improve things so that you can have a better stroke recovery.

Chapter Four: Rewiring The Brain

Bill Gasiamis 21:17

So chapter four is titled Rewiring The Brain, and it opens with a quote from Dr. Donald Hebb. Donald Hebb was a Canadian psychologist whose groundbreaking research on brain functions helped bridge the fields of psychology and neuroscience, and the quote goes "Neurons that fire together, wire together."

Bill Gasiamis 21:41

And basically, this chapter is simply about rewiring the brain. And what we want to do is give people a bit of an insight into Neuroplasticity and rewiring the brain. And that is important for stroke survivors to understand, they may have heard that you're never going to walk again, or they may have heard some negative comments from doctors.

Bill Gasiamis 22:05

And what we want to do is we want to break those negative comments that the doctors have said into a million pieces and scatter them away, and encourage people and make them enthusiastic about the possibility that rewiring the brain is a thing that happens. Neuroplasticity is a thing that happens. And for people who don't know about Neuroplasticity, and rewiring the brain, we might be introducing this in this chapter.

Bill Gasiamis 22:34

The book does a really good job here of going into the science behind Neuroplasticity. It describes that the studies on Neuroplasticity go back around 200 years from the current time. And it has been a massive field of inquiry for many, many years.

Bill Gasiamis 22:55

But it wasn't until the late 60s that the science was able to be proven. In this book, there's just a very deep level of understanding of how neuroscience has bridged the gap to show that the brain is plastic and that the brain is capable of changing and learning new things. And it doesn't matter what your age is.

Bill Gasiamis 23:22

As a result of that, we go through, and we give a whole bunch of information here that makes it possible for people to use their imagination, to imagine themselves, rewiring the brain. And just simply by imagining using your imagination without actually physically doing that exercise, you will be rewiring your brain and creating new neurons.

Bill Gasiamis 23:47

It is a must-read chapter. It's the chapter that I think brings the most hope in stroke recovery, and it's one of the most important chapters. And even though it's chapter four, it's at the right time in the recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 24:03

So what we've done is we've given a little bit of an insight into the mindset into the heart brain, into the gut brain. And now what we're doing now that we have that information, we're able to take all that information and apply it to the Neuroplasticity part of the recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 24:23

Which is the rewiring of the brain to get back functions that were lost, perhaps, or to support new neuronal pathways to improve and gain back some of the functions that can be rehabilitated that were taken offline after the stroke.

Chapter Five: Sleep

Bill Gasiamis 24:44

As we continue The next Chapter, Chapter Five is simply titled Sleep, and opens with a quote from Matthew Walker, the author of the book “Why We Sleep?” and the quote goes “Sleep-deprived individuals also generate fewer and less accurate solutions to problems.” I just love that quote, because it’s so appropriate for stroke survivors.

Bill Gasiamis 25:12

If you thought you had problems before stroke, now, as we know, stroke brings its own set of problems. And what we need is a whole bunch of problem-solving. And we need solutions. So I encourage sleep, not only was stroke recovery, but sleep is important for all parts of your well-being.

Bill Gasiamis 25:38

That chapter then opens up with a story from a former nurse who had a stroke and had terrible sleep patterns and partly blames part of her condition. Part of the reason she ended up having a stroke to her lack of good sleep. And then we go into a lot of detail about what sleep is, and why sleep matters.

Bill Gasiamis 26:03

Then we break down some of the scientific parts of sleep, one of the things that we talk about is how a lack of sleep contributes to premature aging of your brain, and we talk about how lack of sleep makes fatigue worse. And the chapter is full of information about how to go about also improving your sleep.

Bill Gasiamis 26:29

And it quotes a couple of other scientific publications and a few other authors. And, if you can do one thing, and nothing else during your stroke recovery, you can make your sleep better. Or if you can sleep more, if you can find a way to get extra sleep during the day, then I support it, because sleep is going to make your stroke recovery faster.

Bill Gasiamis 26:59

You have also got some tips in that chapter about how you can make some small changes in and around your home to support you in getting back into a good sleep cycle. And then going through the process of feeling refreshed in the morning when you wake up and hopefully relying less on medication.

Chapter Six: Food For Thought

Bill Gasiamis 27:23

The next Chapter, Chapter Six is Food For Thought. And I just love this chapter because it now starts to tie in the concepts and the ideas from the previous chapters. So George Fueschel's quote earlier was "Garbage in garbage out." then we had Matthew Walker, quote "Sleep-deprived individuals, individuals also generate fewer and less accurate solutions to problems."

Bill Gasiamis 27:51

This just ties in beautifully with the nutrition chapter it ties in because if we fuel our brain with high-quality foods, we remove sugars and reduce our intake of complex carbohydrates, we stop drinking alcohol, we don't smoke, and we support our gut with the right food, we're going to through that gut-brain access be automatically supporting the brain, as well as supporting the body.

Bill Gasiamis 28:23

This chapter goes around describing where some of our food habits may have come from, how to go about making those changes why food matters, why it matters for you to be careful about the food that you consume, and where you're consuming it from and what quality of food you're consuming.

Bill Gasiamis 28:46

I also talk a little bit about my journey with food and how I used to eat to remove hunger, rather than to nourish my body and how that important switch for me, was able to change the way that I went about decreasing the low-quality foods that I used to eat, and the way that I would go about spending more time focusing on meal preparation.

Bill Gasiamis 29:12

And I also talked about how food or the wrong food causes inflammation in the body, and how we can go about decreasing inflammation in the body by simply

changing the food that we consume. And if we do reduce inflammation, that is a great thing because inflammation is part of what the problem is in the brain. If we can have a positive impact in decreasing inflammation in our brain, then we are getting out of the way of the brain being able to do its thing and heal rather than continuously irritating and inflaming it by eating inflammatory foods.

Bill Gasiamis 29:52

One of the cool things about this chapter is that when I talk about the diet and making changes to the diet I don't only talk about what you consume, but also talk about the things that we need to take out of the diet.

Chapter Seven: Let's Get Physical

Bill Gasiamis 30:05

As we continue and move on to Chapter Seven: Let's Get Physical. The chapter is all about exercise. And it opens with a quote from Albert Einstein, which says "Nothing happens until something moves." that quote is not about exercise, Albert Einstein would not have said that so that he could encourage people to do more exercise.

Bill Gasiamis 30:28

But it is an awesome quote that can very much be applied to exercise, because if you're not moving your body, nothing's happening, you become stagnant, and things stop working properly. So there has to be movement, movement creates a whole bunch of neuro-chemical changes in the body, that help the body and the brain in a very big way.

Bill Gasiamis 30:53

It's a very positive thing to move, and you do not have to move as you moved before if you were a runner, and now you can't run or if you're a cyclist, and there can't cyclist, you don't have to necessarily be moving in the same way you did before the stroke. And this chapter just goes into all the information that you need to know about why exercise is important, and how to do exercise now that you have a disability perhaps, or now that you are physically different.

Bill Gasiamis 31:22

And I like this part of the chapter because I talk about what exercise is. And I want to just make sure that people don't feel bad about the kind of exercise that

they can or can't do. I open up with an Oxford dictionary definition of exercise which says "That exercise is to engage in physical activity to sustain or improve health and fitness."

Bill Gasiamis 31:46

And then I make the point that the definition does not mention that exercise must be hard or painful. It is not mentioned that you will always be motivated to participate in it. It doesn't mention that you have to be able to do it for hours and hours and sustain lots of long exercise sessions, it doesn't mention that you should be good at it.

Bill Gasiamis 32:07

I'm just trying to break some people's patterns of thinking about exercise so that people can feel like everyone can participate in the exercise, even though it doesn't look the way that it looked before the stroke. And any small amount of exercise is going to support creating a whole bunch of positive changes in the body and the brain.

Chapter Eight: Living Heartfully

Bill Gasiamis 32:32

As we move on, we get to Chapter Eight: Living Heartfully. And I love this chapter, it is the chapter that I relate to the most, I think. And it starts with a quote by Ernest Hemingway, and the quote goes "Sometimes following your heart means losing your mind."

Bill Gasiamis 32:55

And I just love this quote, because it relates to me so much. I mentioned a little earlier that my head had switched off and my heart kind of came to life or was able to express itself. When it happened to me, it was probably the first time that I'd felt that way. And I didn't know what was going on, I was being guided by my heart, and I was doing things that I previously would not have done.

Bill Gasiamis 33:23

Because my head would have convinced me out of it. I was doing things that I loved and enjoyed. And that doing things that I loved and enjoyed during that time of stroke recovery was such a massive contrast because, before the strike, I wasn't doing anything that I loved and enjoyed. I was just going to work, working

too many hours struggling with all the things that a person who has their own small business struggles with.

Bill Gasiamis 33:50

And there was just no me time. And what I found was that after the stroke, there was a lot of me time. Sure, I wasn't working, and I had hospital appointments and things got serious at some point. And we didn't know what the plan, plans were going to be, or what the future held. But what I was experiencing was daily joy, because I was doing things I loved.

Bill Gasiamis 34:17

And I was fixing things and changing things with the people who I loved and telling them that I loved them. And I was living heartfully and my heart was telling me to do these things. At the time of writing the book, there was no definition for the word heartfulness.

Bill Gasiamis 34:34

But what I was trying to do with this chapter was move away from the word mindfulness, because you hear about living mindfully or being mindful all the time. And when I hear that word, I just hear that what I'm doing is filling my mind further.

Bill Gasiamis 34:49

So mind full, to me isn't a concept that I can relate to others I appreciate, but living heartfully does. filling my heart with things that my heart desires and bring me joy is something that resonates with me. And that's what I attempt to do in this chapter is to describe what heartfulness is, how to live happily, and the benefits of being heartfelt to stroke recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 35:17

And just before I move on from this chapter, I want to talk about the definition that I came up with, because there is none. No definition. What how I described as heartfelt: was to be full of heart, and to have the qualities of having a generous, compassionate, or loving nature, tending to exhibit qualities of the heart.

Bill Gasiamis 35:42

So it talks about finding what the qualities of the heart are, and then exhibiting those natures, and having those qualities and practicing those qualities, and heartfulness is the state of being heartfelt, the quality of being full of heart, the

measure of having generous, compassionate, or loving nature.

Bill Gasiamis 36:07

So I found that being heartfelt was a far more beneficial thing to me than being mindful. And I think that it does support people in getting to that point where they start to unravel or unpack what their life's purpose is. The last chapter life, a purposeful life or discovering your life's purpose, is the chapter that wasn't meant to exist.

Bill Gasiamis 36:34

The reason it wasn't meant to exist is because I never set out to find my life's purpose, but I just uncovered it, I discovered it. And I think part of the reason why I got there and discovered that this book, this podcast is communities my life's purpose, one of the part of the reason I got there is because I started living heartfully. And that's what I'm trying to do here set the scene as to how to get to find your purpose, you're not going to work out your life's purpose with your head.

Bill Gasiamis 37:03

So that's why I love this chapter It does set the scene for how we need to elevate the heart, how previously the heart may have been given a backseat to the mind, and why intelligence of the head was more important.

Bill Gasiamis 37:20

We'll talk about how emotional intelligence I spoke about in the Heart Brain chapter, how emotional intelligence and the heart go hand in hand, and how by enhancing the heart, we can experience a higher quality of life, a higher quality of joy that comes out of life, even after we've had a stroke, and the stroke is causing us all of the challenges that they do.

Chapter Nine: Building A Supportive Community

Bill Gasiamis 37:49

Chapter Nine is about Building A Supportive Community. Now though, nobody can do anything in life without the support of some family or friends, or a community, nobody can do it alone. So if you're struggling, if you're doing things

alone, and you're feeling like you need more help, this chapter is for you, you need to find a way to build a supportive community.

Bill Gasiamis 38:13

Now, the good thing about it is that communities can live online these days they don't have to be communities that you drive to or visit, although I recommend that you get to real-life people, communities where real-life people exist, that are encouraging and supportive, you might find that those communities exist online.

Bill Gasiamis 38:34

The chapter opens with a quote from Marcus Aurelius, and the quote goes "Don't be ashamed to need help, like a soldier storming a wall, you have a mission to accomplish."

Bill Gasiamis 38:47

And if you have been wounded, and you need a comrade, to pull you up, so what I love it, because it's like, so what you need help, go and get the help that you need. You've been wounded. You need support, you need a comrade, you've got a mission to accomplish. It's a massive mission, you need to go after it. And that's what that quote encourages us to do. And that's what chapter nine is all about building a supportive community.

Bill Gasiamis 39:15

Often what happens in these supportive communities is you go there to get support, but you end up being the support for other people. And then it's a beautiful loop. It's a beautiful circle. And then I go into some of the research about the information that's available out there about what it's like to create a supportive community and how to change the kind of communities that you hang around in.

Bill Gasiamis 39:43

Not by getting rid of all the people who are in your life, but by placing additional people into your life and those people that you place into your life are going to support your recovery more and more and more. Mini-stroke survivors talk about the challenges that they faced with friendships, some people drop off, and you end up feeling a little bit lonely, and you don't understand why people didn't come to visit you. And all of that is a normal part of stroke recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 40:12

That happens is, a lot of people don't have the resources or the skills to help you overcome the challenges that they're going through after a stroke, plus, it could be triggering for them, and they may not know how to go about stepping up in a way that's going to be supportive to you. So they move away. And when they move away, you feel like they're doing something wrong, but actually what they're doing is they're doing your favor.

Bill Gasiamis 40:40

And the chapter goes deeply into how the five people that you hang out with the most are going to influence your recovery. But not only the five people that you hang out with the five people that they hang out with, and the five people that they hang out with. And what I do is I go into some research that shows how overall, we are influenced directly by about 125 People from all the different people we hang out with.

Bill Gasiamis 41:10

So by changing the people, the five people that you hang out with the most, and swapping them out, that's not getting rid of people that's not stopping communicating with other people, but it's just adding and including more supportive people into your daily, more some, by adding more supportive people into the group of people that you see more often.

Bill Gasiamis 41:37

Then what you're going to do is you're going to have a better possibility of making the right type of changes, whether it's in your mindset, in your nutrition, in the amount you exercise, in the way you solve problems, you're going to be able to do those things a hell of a lot better. And this chapter says the supportive community is a really important chapter.

Bill Gasiamis 42:05

Because without community, we struggle without people supporting us and advocating for us and encouraging us and patting us on the back when we achieve something great, or something minor that is great, then what we do is we don't have a recovery that's as quick and as successful as it can be.

Chapter Ten: Stumbling Into Purpose

Bill Gasiamis 42:28

Now the next Chapter, and the last chapter is the Chapter on “Stumbling Into Purpose” chapter 10.

Bill Gasiamis 42:37

The chapter opens up with a quote from His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, which says “My main purpose and motivation is not the issue of Tibet, but rather the promotion of human values to have happier individuals, families and communities, and in that way, a happier humanity.” and that’s kind of what is the outcome of living your life, and going about your stroke recovery in a way that ends up with you being able to say that stroke was the best thing that happened to you.

Bill Gasiamis 43:28

Because what inevitably you do, by taking the steps that we’ve just spoken about the last nine steps that we’ve spoken about, is you end up finding tools, and things that have worked for you that you’re telling other people who are in need that may be working for them. And then when you’re providing people with tools that may be working for them. And they are benefiting from that what they are most definitely doing is they are imparting that knowledge and information to the next person who needs it.

Bill Gasiamis 44:08

And that’s what I’ve found in this stroke recovery community that we’ve created on Instagram on YouTube, on the podcast, and I found that there’s a loop happening, information loop information comes from the people who I interview to me, and then to the people who are listening and the people who are listening are often then referring that information on to other people. And nobody has any other interest in providing that information.

Bill Gasiamis 44:42

They don’t have any single bit of information, they don’t have any single bit of interest in providing the information other than to support and help somebody else. And that’s the most amazing thing. I just see people who are going through a tough time helping other people but that’s somehow making life better for them somehow improving their stroke recovery, their self-worth, it’s improving every aspect of their life, regardless of how difficult the deficits are for them to

overcome.

Bill Gasiamis 45:14

They're finding purpose and meaning in being able to support other stroke survivors. They don't set out necessarily to do that but it's kind of what happens, it's the result of just sharing information. And once we start doing that, what we find is that purpose emerges.

Bill Gasiamis 45:36

Now, for me, the way that purpose emerged was, and I've mentioned that already, a little earlier in this presentation, the way that purpose emerged was, I found myself sitting through an episode with one of my guests. And I found myself reflecting on all the amazing things that came out of stroke, and the feedback that I get daily from stroke survivors from all around the world about what the podcast means to them.

Bill Gasiamis 46:06

I see it on Google, on the reviews from iTunes, I see it on the reviews from Spotify, I see it in the comments on YouTube, and I see it in the emails that I get directly, I see it on the messages that I get from Instagram and Facebook. And I've got a whole bunch of people contacting me and letting me know how amazing this service that I'm providing has been for them and their recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 46:37

And I never knew that that was going to lead to me finding my purpose, and feeling good about myself and how I'm contributing to the planet, I still am all the other things that I always was, I'm still a dad, I'm still a husband, I'm still a son and a brother, and I'm still somebody who goes to work and does all those things.

Bill Gasiamis 46:59

But I've added this massive chunk of purpose into my life. And it's driving me far more, and it's making me wake up in the mornings far more than anything else I've ever done in my life. And don't get me wrong, my kids are pretty high up in the wake-up in the morning, the kind of task that I needed to do and what motivated me to get out of bed. But as they're getting older, and they rely on me less, I'm finding ways to supplement that.

Bill Gasiamis 47:32

And I'm nurturing these other people who need nurturing and support, who need

a community who need somebody to have their back. And for me, I never would have been the kind of person who'd done this kind of work if it wasn't for the stroke. I just didn't think about other people, I always thought about myself. And the purpose in life kind of emerges from you doing things for other people.

Bill Gasiamis 48:01

It's bizarre, but that's how it emerges. And it's, and me doing things for other people comes from my heart, it doesn't come from my head, I never would have sat down and worked out what it was that was going to enable me to stumble into my purpose. And that's what the chapter is all about. It just goes into so much, and the Dalai Lama is a perfect example of living a purposeful life because he's all about making humanity better, where can he start making humanity better from his backyard?

Bill Gasiamis 48:35

So for me, all of the work that I started doing is making a massive difference at home with the people that I'm involved in directly. To date, I've sold more copies of the book to people within my direct community than people outside of my community. Now I expect that to change, but it is so amazing to see the support of the people in my community, the people who I live with whom I interact with, they're interested to know why I've written this book.

Bill Gasiamis 49:04

They're interested to know what's inside the pages, and how it might help them. And most of the people that have bought the book have not had a stroke, which is the most amazing thing. And I love the fact that it's non-stroke survivors who supported the book at the very beginning. So that's why this chapter exists because it never should have existed, and it turns out that it does exist.

Bill Gasiamis 49:30

The good thing about this chapter is it takes some lessons from some people from the past who are amazing in their own right, and one of those people is Viktor Frankl.

Man's Search For Meaning

Bill Gasiamis 49:40

Viktor Frankl was the person who wrote the book "Man's Search for Meaning"

and he wrote the book after being a prisoner of war in a concentration camp or multiple concentration camps during the Second World War he was a victim and his family was a victim of the Holocaust.

Bill Gasiamis 50:04

He wrote his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, to talk about the purpose that he was able to extract out of being in a concentration camp and seeing the horrors that one would see, having lived in a concentration camp and survived a concentration camp.

Bill Gasiamis 50:23

His purpose for being in a concentration camp was transformed into being able to tell the story, he feels like without a purpose of being able to tell the story, share the experiences that he had in the concentration camp, and what humanity can learn from the atrocities that occurred in the concentration camp. He felt that that was part of one of the major reasons that saved his life, and that's how that's how amazing suffering is.

Bill Gasiamis 50:57

Suffering can be something that we experience and is completely destructive and destroys us. Still, suffering can also be transformed into your life's purpose, and that's what I think the experience of my experience, experiencing a stroke and suffering from a stroke mentally, emotionally, and physically, has been able to do it's been has been able to be transformed by me making these decisions to help other people, it's been transformed into this positive thing.

Bill Gasiamis 51:26

That is why the book is called "The Unexpected Way That A Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened" and I've created a little bit of an equation that helps people understand what the purpose of suffering is, and it goes "Suffering plus meaning plus action equals purpose." and I hope that your suffering can trend can be transformed into some other higher purpose, a higher meaning, and I hope that you take action with that in mind, and I hope from that action that you take, you end up finding your purpose.

Bill Gasiamis 52:05

This book has transformed my life, this stroke has drawn and transformed my life, this podcast has transformed my life, and I hope that you are now curious, and

you will consider a copy, and that you'll be able to learn from that and when you learn from that you'll be able to use what you learned to help other people, and you will be a good example for the people in your life about how one should go about overcoming a major health challenge.

Bill Gasiamis 52:36

Well, thank you for tuning in, to grab a copy of the book go to recoveryafterstroke.com/book. If you would like to leave a review of the podcast, the best way to do that is to leave a five-star review and a few words about what the show means to you on iTunes and Spotify. If you're watching on YouTube, comment below the video, like this episode and to get notifications of future episodes subscribe to the show on the platform of your choice.

Bill Gasiamis 53:03

I do hope that your 2024 is full of recovery and transformation. Thank you for being here and see you on the next episode.

Intro 53:12

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Intro 53:29

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Intro 53:42

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Intro 54:06

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Intro 54:20

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Intro 54:33

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