

Parenting After Stroke - Dr. Bettina Tornatora

Parenting is hard enough but parenting after stroke brings with it so many more challenges. Today I am joined by Dr. Bettina Tornatora for a discussion of some of the problems parents face after a stroke

Socials:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/bettina-tornatora>

<https://www.luxconsultingco.com>

<https://www.instagram.com/bettinatornatora>

Highlights:

02:10 Introduction

04:28 Dr. Bettina Tornatora

12:08 Mutually Beneficial

15:07 Parenting After Stroke

24:10 Dealing With Fatigue While Parenting

32:25 A Different Perspective

38:58 Just The Right Amount Of Support

44:47 Distance And Personal Growth

59:14 Forgiveness Workshop

1:10:49 The Best Six Years

Transcription:

Bettina 0:00

The journey we travel with them isn't just for them. It's actually for us. And what it does is it anything that we've got kind of sitting like, you know, when you have water that sits in a vessel for a while and you get sediment at the bottom, right, even the cleanest water has particles in it, and eventually, you see them.

Bettina 0:21

Well, I believe that we've all got them in our psychology. And what happens is kids come and they dig in the sediment and they stir it all up, and they make it

cloudy. And so, for me, I was fortunate enough that my mindset and I think you're right, there's something about the way I saw things I had to get to the point of saying, this is not happening to me, it's happening for me.

Intro 0:48

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

Bill Gasiamis 1:01

Hello, and welcome to recovery after stroke a podcast full of answers, advice, and practical tools for stroke survivors to help you take back your life after a stroke and build a stronger future.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13

I'm your host three times stroke survivor Bill Gasiamis after my own life was turned upside down and I went from being an active father to being stuck in hospital. I knew if I wanted to get back to the life I loved before my recovery was up to me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:28

After years of researching and discovering I learned how to heal my brain and rebuild a healthier and happier life than I ever dreamed possible. And now I've made it my mission to empower other stroke survivors like you to recover faster, achieve your goals and take back the freedom you deserve.

Bill Gasiamis 1:45

If you enjoy this episode and want more resources, accessible training and hands on support, check out my recovery after stroke membership community created especially for stroke survivors and caregivers.

Bill Gasiamis 1:57

This is your clear pathway to transform your symptoms, reduce your anxiety and navigate your journey to recovery with confidence, head to recoveryafterstroke.com to find out more after this podcast.

Introduction - Dr. Bettina Tornatora



Bill Gasiamis 2:10

But for now, let's dive right into today's episode. This is episode 166, and my guest today is Dr. Bettina Tornatora, author of the book *Learning From Children: A New Way Of Approaching The Challenges In Your Life*.

Bill Gasiamis 2:26

Bettina is also a speaker, a coach as well as the creator of your space, the host of Your Space podcast, and the co-founder of Lux consulting group where she insists that trusting yourself with an uppercase T is hardly innate.

Bill Gasiamis 2:43

It's something you have to learn how to do. Bettina Tornatora, welcome to the podcast.

Bettina 2:50

Hi Bill.

Bill Gasiamis 2:52

Thank you so much for being here. I really appreciate it. I met you and your husband, Jim the awesome couple. Probably I think about two years ago.

Bettina 3:05

Yeah, that'd be right.

Bill Gasiamis 3:07

Connected with you guys really well, learnt a lot from you in the space that we were in together. And heard you do a little presentation, your very first

presentation on a topic that's really close to your heart that, you know, kind of ruminated and kind of just you know, went around in my head.

Bill Gasiamis 3:29

And at the end, you handed each person who was in the audience, one of your books. And, you know, I'm 47 and my kids are now 25 and 21. And when you gave this to me two years ago, it's like my kids, they're out of the picture. Like, I don't really need this book now Bettina, because I know everything I need to know about parenting.

Bill Gasiamis 3:57

Turns out I really needed the book when I was recovering from stroke. And more than ever, did parenting become an issue and a challenge for me during stroke recovery, if I thought I didn't know what the hell I was doing before stroke, I definitely didn't know what the hell I was doing a after stroke. Before we talk about that, tell me a little bit about your background and how you came to be putting this book together?

Dr. Bettina Tornatora

Bettina 4:28

So thank you, thank you. Yes, and exactly what you said, you know, people don't realize what they need sometimes until it's like, oh shit, oh my God that's really what you know what I needed.

Bettina 4:40

So my background on now 27 years as a health practitioner as a chiropractor. And you know, I've worked with kids that whole time. So children were always a big part of my life, I always wanted to be a parent.

Bettina 4:55

I was fortunate enough that I met the love of my life, Jim, who you mentioned really early in the piece So we actually had children fairly early on. And, you know, I, honestly, I thought, you know, by the time I had kids, I'd gone through a really tough uni degree, I'd run businesses, I played high level sports.

Bettina 5:16

And I thought, you know, how hard can it be? Right? Like, they're just babies really like, yeah, it's just yeah, everyone has them. They have them all over the

world. Surely, it's not that hard. In fact, I don't think I even thought, would it be hard, it never even occurred to me not on my radar.

Bettina 5:35

And then God bless my eldest arrived, and my world just imploded. Like, literally, it was like, nothing I've learned up until that point was of any bloody use. And all this, you know, I don't know, I guess, confidence that I had. And I bumbled my way through it. And because he brought with him certain challenges, which I'll talk about later, I'm sure you know, how they shaped me as a parent and as a human now.

Bettina 6:11

What that meant was, I had to look outside the square for resources, I the standard resources, the standard books even just didn't cover it. And they certainly didn't cover it with the kind of respect that I wanted to give my child. And so consequently, I had to kind of feel my way through it.

Bettina 6:30

And I did that, not because I'd ever thought I'd written a book, like if you told me, literally my kids are the same as your age 25 and 21. You told me when my kids were probably up until about 10 years ago, that I would even dream of writing a book about parenting, I would have laughed so hard, I would have literally fallen over.

Bettina 6:50

Because I thought I had just scraped through. Everything I did was for me to be able to survive being a parent. That's it, I really didn't have any concept of it. And so over time, I became a coach and I started working with people and part of that work, I'm really interested in, you know, why things happen, why we do things.

Bettina 7:12

And sometimes that means we go back into childhood experiences. And anyway, so I started sharing with my clients, what I'd learned, right? I'd say, Oh, look, I learned the lesson about this, because my child brought me that. And this is a situation that happened and I was forced to learn this lesson.

Bettina 7:30

And so the more I shared those the more people started saying, Are these written down anywhere? Because they're actually some value and I'm like, at first, I was

like, No, don't be silly. And then eventually, someone said, hey, I'll help you put it together. And so consequently, the book was born and we did a bunch of workshops, which I haven't done for a while.

Bettina 7:48

And just when I think it's all going away, someone asked me about. So, you know, I jokingly say, I've been a parent for 25 years. So that's about the 100th trimester, I think, is how we are looking at it. Because they never really are truly born they just grow.

Bettina 8:11

And so I'm still learning, and I've had the blessing now of, you know, I'm getting to that point in my life where I've got that fullness of time. And, you know, just yesterday had the most amazing experience with our boys sitting down, where the four of us as a family, were talking about a business deal that we're doing together.

Bettina 8:31

And, you know, I look at that, and I think about all the hardship that we went through. And I go, well, it was worth it. Because today, I've got these two amazing men that I get to share my life with who just happened to also have been my kids. So, that's kind of where I got to today.

Bill Gasiamis 8:51

That's a pretty good way to get there. I mean, I know, You've mumbled and stumbled and fumbled your way there. Like I know that it doesn't just happen instinctively right? But some people have an instinct to guide them to decision making that's more useful, I suppose.

Bill Gasiamis 9:12

And my wife and I kind of had that as a team as well, but that didn't mean that we knew we were doing it, we just kind of found ourselves in a decent place. You know, I'm bad cop she's good cop. Good Cop frustrated, the hell out of me. Bad cop frustrates the hell out of her.

Bill Gasiamis 9:34

But somehow, the balance of both kind of came together in the right way. And what we got was a really meaningful version of don't speak to the kids like that. Da da da... or you should be speaking to the kids like this da da da... Because

what I was doing as a father as the you know, as the male role model in my son's life, I knew the male version of how they need to be spoken to, treated, which words to pay attention to high ones are the bluff words.

Bill Gasiamis 10:18

And she didn't know any of that. But also, as a mother, I didn't know any of the stuff that she knew, which was a nurturing, you know, the more nuanced nurturing version and all that kind of stuff. So even though it was really hard for me to learn, in the moment, I definitely learned a lot from my wife, especially when she said, stop talking for God's sake. He's telling you about his feelings. It's time to listen.

Bettina 10:48

There's wisdom there. Yeah, absolutely.

Bill Gasiamis 10:51

But she and I didn't know that we were actually imparting useful information to each other. And that was the part that I would have loved to know that Oh, okay. She's not just telling me off. She's actually telling me something that I need to pay attention to.

Bettina 11:10

Yeah, and I think that's the truth. You know, there's a part in that book. And one of the things that's really interesting why that my work is, I can call it learning from children. Because I think that when a child comes into your world, and this is not just true of your own children, it can be all children.

Bettina 11:32

And I've had people who are teachers who've come back and said, this is valuable for them. And people who are operating as step parents, or you know, have children in their world somewhere. A lot of grandparents actually are really loving working with this space, because in a generational change, you parent differently.

Bettina 11:53

And so their children will parent differently to and they're involved with the kids, so they want to be connected. But here's the thing is we're all doing the absolute best we can in that moment, right? If we're playing with whatever tools we have, and they're the only ones we have at that point.

Mutually Beneficial

Bettina 12:08

And so that's one point, I think, to keep really, in back of mind, but also that the journey we travel with them isn't just for them, it's actually for us. And what it does, is anything that we've got kind of sitting like you know, when you have water that sits in a vessel for a while and you get sediment at the bottom, right?

Bettina 12:31

Even the cleanest water has particles in it. And eventually you see them? Well, I believe that we've all got them in our psychology. And what happens is kids come and they dig in the sediment and they stir it all up, and they make it cloudy. And so for me, I was fortunate enough that my mindset, and I think you're right it, there's something about the way I saw things, I had to get to the point of saying, this is not happening to me, it's happening for me.

Bettina 12:59

And as soon as I could start seeing that, I would then I parked my emotional reaction to it. And then I could actually see it for what it was. And you know, my kid wasn't challenging me, although I was the most immediate, you know, person in their world. What it was doing was challenging the world. I just happened to be the representative that showed up that day.

Bettina 13:24

And I think there's something so powerful in that if we can detach a little bit, but at the same time we detach from the immediate circumstance. But then when you walk away, what is it showing you and asking powerful questions of what did I need to learn about myself in this process?

Bettina 13:40

And you know, if nothing else, it gives you something to do, right? Because sometimes, you know, as a parent, you get to the point where you don't know what to do. You don't know what to say, you don't know where to go, you've run out of resources. And so for me, in those moments, the least I could do was say, Okay, what am I learning here?

Bettina 13:59

What am I learning about myself? And what do I need support with? What

resources do I need to seek out? It gave me a strategy until I knew what the actual action strategy was. So yeah, it's no easy journey.

Bill Gasiamis 14:16

I love what you said, it's about the children being in the world responding to the world rather than to you. Even if it's your view of the world, or your way that you interpret the world, it's still the way that they are responding. They're responding to that it's not personal or hasn't become personal yet.

Bill Gasiamis 14:38

Unless you've done something to personally traumatize them on purpose and you're a terrible person. It's not personal. And if you can separate yourself from that, it's not personal well okay, what's actually happening? What's beyond the face value? Like what's in the deeper layers of the conversation that are missing that I haven't heard yet or haven't been expressed yet by my child?

Parenting After Stroke

Bill Gasiamis 15:07

Because I don't know how they're communicating well, they don't know how to communicate. And for me, if I think back at my time, before stroke, it was definitely my emotional intelligence was not high. There's a lot of reasons for that. I'm a bloke, I grew up with a brother, I went to school where I was told not to cry, because you'd be sook.

Bill Gasiamis 15:36

And all the stuff that goes with just becoming an adult male, that's just par for the course. But when you don't know that, what you do is me personally allowed it to interfere with becoming emotionally intelligent, which was a skill that I could pick up and get better at.

Bill Gasiamis 15:57

It's just one that I chose not to go down, because it wasn't considered a thing to do growing up in my age, or, you know, many generations before that, and potentially many generations after ours. So what I was missing was that nuanced conversation that they were sharing, they were using emotional words. And I was completely going in one ear and out the other, and I had no idea what they meant.

Intro 16:25

If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time it can be, you're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind. Like, how long will it take to recover? Will I actually recover? What things should I avoid? In case I make matters worse, doctors will explain things that obviously, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask.

Intro 16:49

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

Intro 17:08

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. And they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery. Head to the website. Now, [recovery after stroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com) and download the guide. It's free.

Bill Gasiamis 17:27

Instinctively, they knew how to express themselves, I didn't know how to pick up on the clues. And it used to get me into real sort of difficult conversations with my eldest who was more of a pleaser, he would go out of his way to make sure that he stepped up to the plate to keep the peace and to do what he was told without potentially paying attention to what he wanted out of the situation.

Bill Gasiamis 18:01

My youngest went completely the opposite way. And he did nothing I say to him no matter what. And, it started from when he was a baby, I remember him maybe saying 10 words to me a year up until he was about five years old. So my lack of emotional intelligence took that personally from a five year old.

Bill Gasiamis 18:25

I had no idea how to deal with a five year old who doesn't want to talk to me for some reason. And when he found out that I was home on a particular day where he and his mom were home, and he would sneak into our bedroom to go jump in bed with mum, he'd look in, If I was in the bed, he wouldn't come in. But I used take that personally. And that became an issue for us later on when we became a

teenager.

Bill Gasiamis 18:52

We bridged the gap of our differences after the stroke after I became more emotionally vulnerable because of the life experience that I've had. And now I was trying to undo quote-unquote, the damage that I had done in my children's lives before then because I had regrets.

Bill Gasiamis 19:21

I had regrets about what will happen if I croak it will they think wow, you know, Dad was alright, but bloody hell he was always grumpy. Never let us do anything, or will they think that was a great guy, we learned a lot from him da da da... and I don't think it would have been the second one. I really don't.

Bettina 19:42

Yeah, isn't that phenomenal? I mean, kudos to you because, you know, I think whenever you have something major, you know, in your life and you know, I haven't had a stroke, but I have had a couple of illnesses where I describe them as I saw the edge, one in particular where I'm almost 100% sure I made a choice to live.

Bettina 20:09

And you know, the one of those, they talk about dark nights of the soul, this was a physical dark night of the soul. And, it's really those moments, you really have a choice, when you come out of those, do I just keep doing the same, and pretend that wasn't an epiphany or that wasn't a moment. And just because when those things happen, and I like I said, I haven't recovered from a stroke, but I certainly have recovered for when my body was completely depleted.

Bettina 20:37

And, that takes a lot of time and energy. So to add to that, another dimension where you're saying, Yeah, I've learned some things about myself in that experience. And now I'm going to do the emotional growth on top of the physical repair. And, you know, that's not an easy choice, but it is a distinct choice.

Bettina 21:00

Because I really believe that in the moment, while you're healing your body, I really believe there are portals and openings to healing so many other parts of yourself. And if you miss those opportunities, I think sometimes you can seal

those sections off, and you kind of stay in that safe zone.

Bettina 21:21

And, you know, sometimes I think a lot of people have that experience where they create another level of dimension to themselves, emotional intelligence level goes up. But I think a lot of people don't realize that that's an option for them too and, you know, and I can understand why, you know, if you, when you're trying to recover from something, that's where your physical body is just so depleted and need so much love and attention to even just get upright.

Bettina 21:50

It is very difficult to then be doing emotional work on top of that. But the beauty of children in that world is they don't care, they are still going to push you there, they're still going to turn up, they still expect you no matter how physically depleted you have, they still expect you to be their parent.

Bettina 22:08

And I remember distinctly you know, I had had such a high fever for so long that I actually almost lost the use of my legs like I lost all this muscle mass really, really fast over a period of 10 days. And so I could barely walk without, you know, assistance. And I remember distinctly my eldest who was three at the time.

Bettina 22:36

And something had happened, you know, I was sitting in the lounge room and he was playing and I remember him sitting there, and he wanted something. And my mother had moved in to help because I literally was physically incapable of looking after myself.

Bettina 22:52

And I said to him that he had to wait for his grandmother because she'd gone to the bathroom. And he got so angry started throwing stuff at me, like literally hurling toys at me. And I'm like, physically sitting there going, I can't even get out of the way. And you know, there's Lego flying at my face and I got initially my response was I was really angry.

Bettina 23:15

I did this whole roller coaster, I was angry. And then I was just so disappointed. And anyway, I eventually broke burst into tears. And he kind of kept going. And then my mum arrived and she sorted out whatever drama it was that needed to be

sorted out.

Bettina 23:30

But I really sat there and I thought, you know what, I could take this as you know, at three, how does he know? He just knows I'm back he has no idea what's going on? Because to him, I look exactly the same. What he doesn't realize that on every level, I'm not the same.

Bettina 23:48

And so that you know, getting to the place of going yeah, okay, I've got to understand that. I've got to do this journey as well, on top of everything else, I've got to try and handle, I've still got to find a way to be his parent. And, you know, that wasn't an easy choice. And it takes a lot of energy. It really does.

Dealing With Fatigue While Parenting After Stroke



Bill Gasiamis 24:10

I can completely relate to what you're saying about being physically depleted because stroke. That's what it does to people it creates fatigue that they've never experienced before. And that means that they are not capable some days of doing absolutely anything and they just physically can't do it.

Bill Gasiamis 24:28

And my kids even at as young teenagers, had no idea what was going on with me. I also looked physically okay, I look the same as I did when I left hospital, when I

went to hospital came back look the same. So they don't know what a stroke is. I mean, I don't even know what a stroke is at 37 let alone them how are they going to know thank God.

Bill Gasiamis 24:54

So then I'm having a conversation with them about the usual run of the mill. You know, do this for Mom, do this for Dad, do your homework, sit down and all the usual stuff. But I'm doing that from a space of zero charge left in the battery. Which means that it's really quick to go from get that done to off the deep end, losing my shit over something which I shouldn't be losing my shit over under normal circumstances.

Bill Gasiamis 25:31

I mean, it wasn't that long ago that it was still happening. I've been nearly 10 years on this journey. And it was as early as only a couple of years ago. We're getting them as older teenagers and one of them was beyond his teenage years, to just help out in the kitchen for me, on certain days, was a real battle because I didn't know how to communicate properly.

Bill Gasiamis 25:57

I didn't have the time to go through all of the amount of discussion that needed to bring them on board with me willingly. So what I do is just go to do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, (yelling) you know, like, very quickly. So stroke survivors are raising kids trying to recover from stroke, the complexity of it.

Bill Gasiamis 26:27

My wife doesn't know what the hell's going on. Because this guy is losing his shit over a plate or a fork, or whatever. Surely, you need to lose your shit over a plate or fork, which is correct. Except I don't know how not to? I don't know.

Bettina 26:44

Yes, exactly. And, here's the thing, you know, and that's true. So many things in parenting. Like, who teaches us? I mean, here's the thing, too. This is the first generation, really. So our children, and then their children. So that's the generation who will, they're different.

Bettina 27:08

But we've changed how we see people, how we see children, the fact that emotional intelligence wasn't a conversation, even 25 years ago, that would have

been considered way out there right? So we have shifted as people to this new way of being and our kids are reflective of that, even though they don't consciously know it.

Bettina 27:29

There's an expectation of being able to do those things with them to explain why all those things. But who taught us how to do that? I mean, we can't we the first generation really have parents who can't go, oh, well, my parents did it with me, it's good enough for mine, it's good enough for my kids.

Bettina 27:45

Because if I tried to pull the shit, my parents pulled on me, with my kids, oh my god, I'd end up in court. Right? You know, Jim, and I often talk about that, you know, like, there was do what you're told or the shoe right. It was like, that's it? We there were no, there was no explaining anything. There was no, that was just wasn't a thing.

Bettina 28:06

Now, rightly or wrongly. I mean, they didn't do it, because they thought, you know, they thought about it, they just did it, you know, but I think that there's, you know, that layer as well, is we, we are dealing with a lot of stuff, and then trying to then navigate them. And I also think that, you know, I'm starting to really see this and God right now it's particularly prominent.

Bettina 28:32

Is that the the structures and the organizations that support kids and support teens, I think they're in lag too. I don't think they've quite caught up to this emotional intelligence that's required, but also the emotional intelligence that kids are literally born with today.

Bettina 28:51

They're not having to learn it. It's like they come pre programmed. And I think we're in a bit of bother, really, because what I'm seeing and what I'm hearing from, you know, from people who are working with kids right now, is, they don't know how to handle it. They just don't know. It's gone really next level, and parents are right in the thick of that, you know, let alone if they've got to deal with anything else.

Bill Gasiamis 29:19

The generation gap seems to be growing rapidly and wider and wider. And it's true what you said about the emotional intelligence conversation. It didn't start happening properly until about 1996 when, you know, Daniel Goleman, wrote the book Emotional Intelligence, which was a pretty far out concept.

Bill Gasiamis 29:41

And that discussion, I think, which started in 1996, has filtered through society of corporations and all these places. Granted, it's still not a, a, a word or a term that everyone uses. is, and everyone knows completely what it is. But I think it's filtered in through there.

Bill Gasiamis 30:04

And there's layers of it that are influencing society in many ways. And what social media has done is allowed people to find communities of socially emotionally intelligent people, and feel a part of something and therefore feel more likely to express it, and not be judged and not feel bullied by their brother or their cousin, or, you know, I grew up in a family with 45 Male cousins and zero female cousins, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 30:36

So there was no conversation around this sort of stuff. So that's why I think the kids are born with it, because it's in the curriculum a little bit. There's more conversations around feelings and hugging. And we have counseling services, more than more counseling services than we've ever had before.

Bill Gasiamis 30:59

So all the people that are around have, inadvertently or gone out of their way to experience a shift in their emotional intelligence skill set and upgrade their levels, one way or another. We have male footballers coming on TV talking about mental health issues, you know, so there's a lot more, a lot more going on.

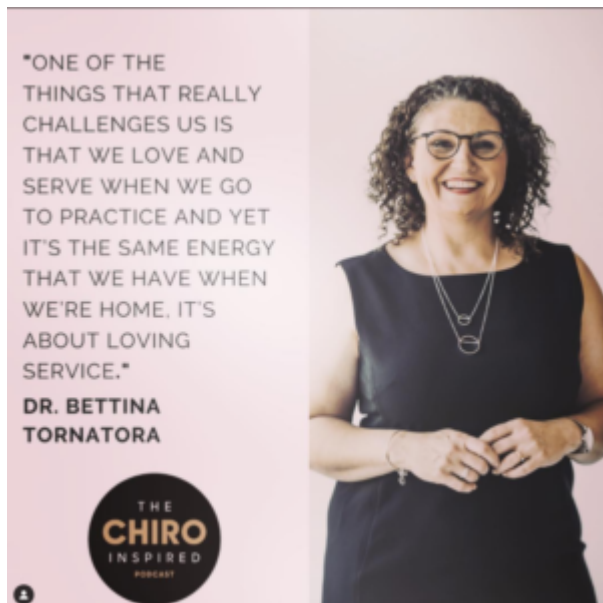
Bill Gasiamis 31:24

So I think that's kind of why the children coming out, are picking up on these clues and going, Hey, this is what we do. Normally, this is emotional intelligence 101 for us. And instead of us stifling it, where we used to have it stifled, it's, it's being allowed to bubble up and emerge, and actually be a part of people's lives on a daily basis. That's what I'm finding, at least in my circles.

Bettina 31:53

Yeah. 100% It's, really interesting. I think I'm one of these people that I just love observing what's happening, you know, I'm a, you know, compulsive learner, I talk about it, you know, it's, I'm always looking for what's really happening out there, and how are people feeling and how are we going as humans and you know, one of the things I love about having young adults in my world through my children is they bring a different dimension of the world to me.

A Different Perspective - Dr. Bettina Tornatora



Bettina 32:25

And so, watching how they're interpreting the world, watching what their expectations of the world are, and they've got an interesting mix, you know, often, both my boys are really clear about some of the things that are going really not great in terms of children at the moment.

Bettina 32:45

One of them in particular, we were talking about this the other day, he's distanced himself from a lot of his high school friends. And part of the reason is he has a really low tolerance for this sense of entitlement that he sees in them. And he, you know, if he wants something, he's out there getting it, he doesn't expect it to be given.

Bettina 33:07

In fact, he sat us, you know, Jim and I down a little while back and said, I listen, I don't sure what plans you have for the long term financial situation, but please don't plan on giving me anything. And we went, what are you talking about? He

said, I won't need an inheritance.

Bettina 33:27

And so I want you to use everything up, don't hold anything back, you know, you're in your 50s. Now, I'm not going to need anything, I know that my brother doesn't, he's not going to need anything, just go for it, whatever you want to do with whatever you have, which was a most extraordinary conversation.

Bettina 33:47

But that comes from that part of him that doesn't believe he's entitled to something if he hasn't gone out and put effort into earn it. And, you know, so we kind of, we raised them, there was a few things that we did with the boys, which we felt was super important in that they played competitive sport, but they played team sport.

Bettina 34:09

And I was really clear that individual sports were not that great for them, you know, at a really early age, even though they both had high skills, high hand eye coordination, all that. But that was about being a human was about being part of a community and part of a tribe.

Bettina 34:25

And what better way to learn that in the, you know, the rigors of team sport. And so we really encourage that, and we made that a big part of our lives. And the reason we did that was purely because Jim and I had had that experience, you know, we had looked back on our time in competitive sport and said, you know, we've learned so much out of this, you know, the biggest lesson some of the hardest lessons, some of the most amazing times they all came out of that experience.

Bettina 34:56

Now we were pretty selective on which, you know, kind of groups we put them in because, you know some of that toxic masculinity is not great in some team sports. But we were pretty careful where we put it. And we made sure we stayed involved. So that, you know, we were finger on the pulse of what was happening.

Bettina 35:13

And so, you know, it's really interesting to watch my boys, now they have that level of emotional intelligence, they can be vulnerable, they can talk about their

feelings, but at the same time, they also have this kind of competitive edge, where they're not expecting the world to hand anything to them on a plate.

Bettina 35:31

And they're observing in some of their friends, the struggle they're going through, because they've come through, you know, schooling where everybody gets an award and trophies for everybody and a family situation where they're constantly told that they're the best thing ever, and that they, they can be whoever they want, the piece they missed is you have to actually put some effort in, you know, it's actually physics, you've got to have a return for the energy you exchange.

Bettina 35:58

So, and, you know, certainly not a perfect world, our boys have had their own struggles. But it is something that's interesting, I think we haven't quite found the equilibrium yet. In the world, I see that and I'm seeing the struggle in the young adults, because, you know, some of them, the first time they experience disappointment is when they try and get a job, or they have their first feedback.

Bettina 36:23

I coach a lot of young graduates in chiropractic, and they get their first feedback session. And that's the first time anyone said, Hey, you're not quite meeting the standard. And they were, I don't know what to do with that. They've got no reference structures, on how to process that information. And I think that becomes a disability, it really does. So it starts early, you've got to, you know, build that stuff in.

Bill Gasiamis 36:55

That sounds like a learning that the parents need to have. So if I think about myself is, and I did do some of that stuff to my kids, I did make them feel like they were amazing. And all I ever got was the opposite. I never got the amazingness out of them. Even though I could see it, I knew what it was.

Bill Gasiamis 37:16

Especially my youngest, no matter how many times I told him, he was amazing, even now, when it's actually earned and necessary for him to hear that he still doesn't believe in himself, or he doesn't believe me, or there's something stopping him from expressing his amazingness in a field, in a shoot or whatever.

Bill Gasiamis 37:38

And he's had a natural gift to be really good at stuff. And make it look like he's not trying, whereas his brother is able to get really good at stuff. But he puts a ton of effort in and a lot of focus and a lot of work to get to a result and he's quite comfortable with that he knows how to get the result.

Bill Gasiamis 38:03

He just knows what he has to do to get there. Whereas the youngest one, he just makes it look like it all just appeared for him, you know, and it's, it looks that way. But I know this stuff going on in the background, but trying to tell my youngest John that he should consider pursuing something that he loves in a particular field.

Bill Gasiamis 38:26

And because we believe in him, it actually gets the opposite result. And can you imagine now me try to support and motivate a kid and then getting them to that point where all I'm doing is supporting him motivating him is actually causing the opposite this weird opposite loop and I'm pulling my hair out going, alright, something's not right here. I don't know what's right. So unfortunately, what I have to do is stop. It's so hard to stop supporting him.

Just The Right Amount Of Support



Bettina 38:58

Yes, I get it. And I have almost a similar thing with my eldest, he, you know, now I have languaging around it, but at the time, I didn't understand. He is so so strongly wired to be internally referenced. He actually does not need or want the

outside world to affirm him in any way.

Bettina 39:25

And so you know, now he's old enough, he can explain the feeling and I really appreciate when he's done that because it makes me understand it and stop beating myself up about it. Because I used to think, oh, you know, I really want to support you. But the thing is for him if he takes the support that he's not ready to and he hasn't asked for, to him that diminishes the experience.

Bettina 39:51

And it means that he's not done it himself and because he's so internally referenced, therefore, he won't be able to celebrate his win because it was somebody else's impetus. And so he's been like that, since he was tiny. Like, I mean, tiny, you know, when they're sitting and they're toddlers, and they're building blocks in front of in between their legs, you know.

Bettina 40:14

And if you handed him a block, he would drop it and pick up the one that he wanted, because he could enjoy the process if he did it. And if anyone else contributed, however, you had to listen really carefully. And this is still true. I think today, when he does ask, it's rare. But it's a genuine ask, he doesn't ask for no reason. It's a real, it's a very different thing.

Bettina 40:45

And even then, you've got to really listen to what he's asking for. If you go beyond that, which is as a parent, what I want to do you know, you want to give him the bloody world, here take my heart if you need it. And you need a kidney? Yeah, sure. Here, I've got one spare. You know, that's what you want to do.

Bettina 41:04

But I've learned that you give him exactly what he asked for. Right? Because, and you know, if it's possible, of course, but if I go beyond that, but again, then I'm pushing the boundary of now it diminishes his experience. And then he gets resentful. It's like, well, I didn't actually ask for that.

Bettina 41:24

So, you know, back off. So I've learned, you know, where that that kind of boundary ease, you know, and like you said, you know, talk about ying and yang, and my, my youngest one is, is different to that, whereas he actually appreciates

that solidness of support, knowing it's there, he will still ask appropriately, you know, when he needs something.

Bettina 41:46

But he actually does need the reminder of, hey, I'm here, right? I'm here, you know, I'm your chief cheerleader, I'll always be there in the stands cheering for you. But he needs to hear that. And I know for a little while there, because you know, your oldest one is you tend to sit kind of the way of being.

Bettina 42:06

And then for us, we got to the second one I went oh no, this one needs something very different. I started saying to them, you know, so the youngest ones 21. I reckon it was about 10 years ago, I actually started saying to them, when they would complain that I parented them differently, because you know, kids go, oh, yeah, but why is he allowed to do this, and I said, stop, stop saying that you are different people, I'm going to parent you differently.

Bettina 42:31

And you may never understand why. And you may at one point, when you're an adult, you might understand this, but right now, I'm going to do it differently, stop trying to find me the same way. Because I have to be different people, for different people, and you are, you couldn't be further apart. You know, there'll be some rules you both have to deal with.

Bettina 42:52

But when it comes to the decisions, we make the timing of when you're allowed to do things and not allowed to do things, how much support you have, Don't come at me with it's different from my brother, because it's going to be just I'm owning it right up front, let's not even have that conversation.

Bettina 43:10

And that was liberating. It just stopped a whole lot of crap, you know, between them. So that was really good. And I don't know where I got the wisdom to do that. Honestly, I think I just got sick of the argument one day and went, alright, I'm not defending this anymore. I have to do it differently they're different kids.

Bill Gasiamis 43:31

My eldest just moved out in just before he moved out, I could tell that if he didn't move out, we would still be running the same relationship that we always ran,

which was in my house, my rules you do what I say blah blah. I was very much aware of it. And he was very much aware of it, but he couldn't help but revert to his way of behaving in the house and I couldn't get away from reverting to the parents to tell the adults 25 year old how to behave in my house.

Bill Gasiamis 44:07

I mean, just this stupid thing when you think about it like that you hear about like that, but the reality is, is that, in fact, he needed to move out because for our relationship to to evolve. It needed to happen in a different setting. He's now only been two weeks out of our house he happened to move in a block away from where his grandparents live, my parents. He spent every third night at their place eating dinner, and has come to our place for dinner a couple of times.

Bill Gasiamis 44:41

So, you know, it's still early days.

Bettina 44:45

Transition.

Distance And Personal Growth

Bill Gasiamis 44:47

But everything is moving towards that direction where we interact now as adults on an even level rather than mum and dad or parent and kid and whoever. So that's been really interesting. That was heart wrenching to have him make the decision and move out and we supported him.

Bill Gasiamis 45:12

And now that he's gone, it's like, yeah. But it was tough. It was tough getting a grip of, you know, how am I going to have a relationship with my son, and it's evolved already. And we don't need to be in each other's space every single day, hearing about all the same stuff over and over again.

Bill Gasiamis 45:31

But the distance has given us more of a respect for the way that we want to be in the world and interact in the world. So he gets to also test the waters. And, you know, we had that I had that conversation with him. I'm not sure who said it, I think it was Freud that said, you know, you don't become a man until your father dies. And then Jung said something along the lines of that death can be a spiritual

death. It doesn't have to be an actual death.

Bill Gasiamis 46:05

The last thing I told him before he left the house is like, you know, this is what I need for you to understand is what's happening right now is, when I come to your house and step out of line, you feel free to throw me the fuck out of there. Tell me, this is my house, my rules. This is how it goes in my house.

Bill Gasiamis 46:27

And I'll learn where the line is. And as a result of that I'll start to like, understand your boundaries and your rules. Because now that's the way it goes. I had to do that with my mom and my dad. After I was married and moved into my own place. I had to literally have the hardest conversations in the world in an argument in a fight and kick them out of my house.

Bill Gasiamis 46:49

And say, listen, I put up with your rules your house up until now, you're in my house. These are my rules you don't like it. Get the fuck out. And tail between their legs. They got out. We've got over it in about a week. But it was a really hard conversation for a son to have.

Bettina 47:09

Yeah. Agree. Yes. Interesting that, you know, both of my boys were about to move out. Before we went to our first lockdown. Literally, we were weeks away. And then their work situation became really tenuous. And, so they both went, you know what, let's just breathe here for a minute and just see what happens.

Bettina 47:30

Well, it was just as well, because it got much worse than when it started. But it was really interesting, because what that first period where we were literally then all at home, for the first time probably ever for that volume of time, you know, it was really intense, or working or running. You know, we're literally two bedrooms and two offices running as full scale offices.

Bettina 47:54

And we actually, I'm really grateful for that time, because now we're at that point, we're there now again, at that point of launch, but we've established now this adult relationship, and we were forced into the pressure cooker of living in that intensity. And it wasn't easy. Like it wasn't easy.

Bettina 48:19

And I know, you know, talking to Jim, you know, I've been home a lot more because I've worked from home, mostly for the last 10 years, you know, my coaching has all been from home. And so I've got very used to the idea that I don't know where my kids are, and I don't know what they're doing. And I don't know when they're coming home, and that's okay.

Bettina 48:39

And that's been that bet for many, many years since they decided on their own curfews. And but Jim would often come home and he'd been at the practice and he'd say, you know, oh, you know, where are they? And I'd go, I don't know. I don't know, they're grown men. They could be anywhere. They have cars, they could be interstate by now.

Bettina 49:03

All I need to know is my only rule was if you don't come home at night, if you plan to sleep elsewhere, I don't care where that elsewhere is, I don't need any details, but just let me know. So I don't see an empty bed and go are you still alive, right? That's all I need to know, a text message. I'm not coming home. That's all I need. I'll forget about it. And you know, we'll see you when I see you.

Bettina 49:25

But it was really interesting to kind of adapt that as a full family. You know, what does four adults living in and working in this space actually look like? And we had to completely redefine how boundaries looked. You know, what were the expectations we had of each other? You know, how did meals even look? Right? Do you know was there even really, we really had to disintegrate everything and start from scratch.

Bettina 49:53

Which now looking back I wouldn't have chosen it that way but was pretty cool that it happened that way. Interesting. In the last eight weeks, so I got an opportunity to apply for a role that was actually International, which was, you know, a real honor to. And as it turned out, I didn't quite hit their criteria that they needed for it was for a tertiary institution.

Bettina 50:15

And so I didn't get the role. But I actually had to sit in a place of saying, so as a

mother, I always as a mother, you always expect your children will move out, right, you stay home, and they move. And all of a sudden, I had to face the reality that I was going to be the one that moved away from my children, and not just up the road, but to the other side of the world.

Bettina 50:41

And, with the current situation, they wouldn't have even been able to follow me or visit. So that was a really interesting time, again, another dimension of learning of how did I identify myself as a mother? What did that mean, when they're 21? And 25? I had to have some pretty big conversations with them, you know, how is this gonna look? And where, where do you see this playing out, and all of those things.

Bettina 51:11

So it was really full on that's been a deep, deep process for us, as a family in the last, you know, six to eight weeks to really delve into, you know, what does what does even being a family like that now look like? And, you know, the beautiful thing about that is when I talked to the boys about that, they said to me, when I said hey, how would you feel about me going for this opportunity? And they said, What would you say to us? And I said, Yes, I said, What are you waiting for? Would you like me to help you pack your bags?

Bettina 51:49

And, you know, they said, Okay, so right back at you, you know, we're proud of you, and so you know, I think that's one of the the things is, you know, I often say you can go through all the crap, and you can make what you consider mistakes with your kids. But if you keep growing as a person, and you keep expanding your level of emotional intelligence, what that gives you capacity to do is to retrospectively have those conversations, and you get to still do healing around that.

Bettina 52:24

You know, I remember sitting where I'd done a particular workshop would have been about 10 years ago now. And I had this moment of realization that because my oldest to the head, you know, he got pushed, because he pushed everyone's boundaries, he also got pushed pretty hard. And, you know, schooling was, was a tough place for him.

Bettina 52:49

And he found it difficult to find places where he would be accepted for who he was, in his own in all his energy. And so I know, there was a part of me realized that I was actually trying to protect him. And I probably over protected him in some ways. And one of those ways was actually holding him back from playing a field football.

Bettina 53:11

One, I was worried about the physical injury, but also I was concerned about his personality type and what that would bring out in others. And I didn't realize that. That's how I felt. And I, at that moment, realize, you know, he really wanted that and it was a pain for him, you know, that he'd never got that opportunity. And so he would have been about 15 at the time.

Bettina 53:32

And so when I came back from the workshop, having had that realization, I sat down with him, I apologized to him. I said, I'm really sorry, that was my shit, not yours, you would have been fine. But I couldn't let you do that. And I'm not saying I'm sorry. I made that decision back then. But what I'm saying is with the information I had and who I was, back then that was the best decision I knew how to make.

Bettina 53:56

And I'm sorry if that's painful to you. And I, you know, I've learned something from that. And, you know, he teases me now, you know, he was beautifully gracious at the time. And I could see he needed to hear that, like he really needed to understand that. And when I took ownership of that decision, it changed something and our dynamic really shifted something powerful. And it's funny now he teases me and says that I robbed the AFL of one of the greatest players of all time apparently. We will never know.

Bill Gasiamis 54:29

Who was he gonna play for Jim's team?

Bettina 54:34

Oh, who knows?

Bill Gasiamis 54:37

He would've played for the team that Jim supports they would have won the grand final, Bettina what have you done?

Bettina 54:47

I know. Do you know he's actually his work and his networking. He's met many AFL players and he tells them that story. So yeah it's me I robbed the AFL.

Bill Gasiamis 55:03

It's interesting on the apology side of it. And that's one of the things that when I thought I wasn't going to be around anymore that I better start doing. And I started doing a retrospectively and every day and every three minutes and every time I did something stupid, and it did change the dynamic of the relationship with both the kids. And it made them be okay that I was stuff up sometimes.

Bill Gasiamis 55:29

And I did the best I could do at the time. And once I realized what a step up, I had been that I could acknowledge that and, and do that and apologize. My oldest son probably finds it easier to apologize, my youngest can't remember any time when he is actually apologized.

Bill Gasiamis 55:49

But he doesn't apologize in the words that I use, he apologizes in a completely different way, I haven't picked up on it every time. But from time to time, when I don't expect it, I get a hug out of him. And he doesn't normally do that. And when I do get one of those, it's like, Okay, I'm gonna take this as an apology as a thank you as every word that you've never said to me, I'm gonna take it as that.

Bill Gasiamis 56:19

Because I don't think I'm ever gonna hear those words. Now, I didn't get an apology from my parents ever. And that really bothered me for a long time. And one of the things that I didn't, wasn't allowed to do similar to us, my parents intervened when I wanted to become an electrician.

Bill Gasiamis 56:39

And I had decided that in in the 10th grade high school, and I was going to go out and do that. And they encouraged me not to do that. And they went out of their way to make sure that I didn't do that. Now, I don't exactly know why. But maybe I've raised it with them once more since then, since I was, you know, 18 or 19.

Bill Gasiamis 56:59

Maybe I've raised it with them once and made a point of it, where they kind of sort of said, Yeah, we didn't really understand what we were doing. And, and that

is something that I'm not sure if I'll ever live down, because it was the one big decision that I made. And it's not that they stopped me it's that I didn't have the guts to push back and say, under no circumstances are you getting in my way.

Bill Gasiamis 57:32

I am going to do this, no matter what. Because think about it. I was trying to forge a career, I wasn't doing something silly. I was forging a career they got in the way. And I didn't have the guts to follow it. So when I became a father at 22, I look back on that time. And I think about how much we struggled when I was 22 when my wife was four years older than me, we were both at home. She was at home with the child mortgage, the usual stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 58:05

And what I didn't have is that five-year headstart that I would have had, if they gave me their blessing and encouraged me. And by then I would have been fully qualified and instead of struggling financially, I would have been able to support my family and feel really good about myself, rather than working three jobs and learning bad habits.

Bill Gasiamis 58:28

About how many hours a week you're supposed to work when you become 37 and own your own business. You know, I had to relearn all that, again, at 37 beyond the stroke, because now now I'm dealing with a business that's failing, a stroke, challenges in my relationships that have gone all over the place.

Bill Gasiamis 58:51

My emotions are all over the place. It's becoming a minefield of stuff that I have to navigate and it's what you said at the beginning. And I have to navigate it all at the same time. While my head is trying to go let me see if I can get you back on line somehow in some shape.

Forgiveness Workshop - Dr. Bettina Tornatora



Bettina 59:14

Absolutely. Do you know that's it's really interesting. I was just talking to someone this morning. And the word that really came to mind for me is the piece on forgiveness and we used to do in the workshop, we would do a process with parents about forgiveness.

Bettina 59:36

And it's a really interesting piece. I know that for me, my and I have similar challenges similar things that with my parents that I held, you know, there's there were these little things I would hold on to and like I'll never forgive you for those things, you know, you you change things for me and it could have been so much easier and so different and all that.

Bettina 59:59

And I remember when I was writing the workshop, and I was a bit hesitant to put forgiveness in there because it's a big topic. And I realized that it's such a big piece for parents, because every parent I've ever talked to, has regrets about something they've done.

Bettina 1:00:19

And it doesn't matter, you know, whether it was five minutes ago when the kid was a baby, or it's 50 years ago, and they're talking about grandchildren, you know, it doesn't matter, there's always something that you felt like you could do better. And that with wisdom and time, you would do differently. And and even if you wouldn't do it differently, you just know that it wasn't right, there was something not right.

Bettina 1:00:43

And I think that's where the emotional intelligence comes in, is being able to see it and go, right. I did it this way. I wouldn't do it that way today. But I did it do that do that way. And here's the thing for me is, the more I forgave myself as a parent, the more I could forgive my own parents, and it shifted the dynamic for me. And, you know, I've had a kind of up and down relationship with my mom since my father passed away 10 years ago, 11 years ago.

Bettina 1:01:16

And I got to the point last year where things were pretty, yeah, you know, they weren't great. And then I, you know, I put myself through a real process on it. And I did a lot of work and school, a lot of support around it. I actually got to the point in January this year where I went right back and said, The only thing that you owed me was to give birth to me.

Bettina 1:01:42

That's it, there's nothing else, everything else after that was a bonus. Every single thing was a bonus, you gave birth to me, you brought me into this world. And that's it. I don't expect anything else. And I never will. And I can tell you now the liberation in that was phenomenal.

Bettina 1:01:58

And it enabled me to go and experience the space with her now, where I have no expectation, you know, I really, if I really don't expect if I get something great if I get something crappy, yeah, you know, I'm slow to go. And I think that only happened because I went through the process of myself as a parent, and forgave myself for all of the things that I thought I completely fucked up.

Bettina 1:02:27

And I had a really, really long list, like, I would have counted nearly every day of my eldest first three, four years as pretty screwed. And, you know, compared to other people, maybe not, but in my mind, for the parent I wanted to be, and who I thought I was, I thought it was gonna be this relax to you know, Earth Mother, parent, I was none of that.

Bettina 1:02:54

None of that I would be that now. But now I'm too old to have kids. Right? Now I could be Earth Mother, and wear the kid on my back and, you know, live in Byron

Bay or wherever. But not then, no way then. So the list of things to forgive, it's been such a process for me.

Bettina 1:03:19

But it was closely into woven with my capacity to forgive my own parents for the things they did, whether they knew they were important or not. And it didn't, they don't know, my dad wouldn't have known. My mom is blissfully unaware of any of that. But the healing is profound, if you can find it.

Bettina 1:03:44

And I've got even another distinction on that, more recently that those traumas are important they happened, you can't change the trauma, it's not to forgive is not to actually negate the trauma. Because sometimes, you know, I've worked with people who are dealing with things that by definition, those things are unforgiveable.

Bettina 1:04:05

The physical abuse and all that sort of stuff, they unforgiveable events, their traumatic events, and they happened, but then how you let them interpret right through, you know, what you make, the meaning, is actually where the damage lies. And so, if you can unravel the meaning, then the traumas just there and you can just say, that's part of my past. And for me, I found that just, I can't even tell you the liberation it gave me it was such a sense of peace. It's worth the work.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:37

Often we talk about, you know, post traumatic stress disorder and, and a couple of episodes before this one, I released an episode that was focusing on how to deal with post traumatic stress. And often we don't talk about post traumatic growth, though. I mean, not often never.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:52

We never talk about it. It's one of those new concepts that just came out in in in about 25 years. It's gonna be at the front of everyone's lips. And I just today before this meeting, I did a presentation to a corporate group about post traumatic growth and my experience with, you know, stroke being the best thing that ever happened to me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:15

And then trying to put that in a way to explain to people that it's not the

experience that I had, that was the best, it's not nearly dying. It's not not knowing how to walk. It's what that taught me about me, about life, about my kids about all of that stuff that made stroke, the best thing that ever happened to me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:33

And I got there, by fluke, by accident, I didn't know that I was getting there. And I only started to notice myself saying about four or five years after the first bleed, but some people that I've met, say that immediately when the stroke happened, it was the best thing that ever happened to them.

Bettina 1:05:55

It's amazing.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:56

They had this epiphany, this moment of clarity, that was able to shift their life to a better place, even though they live with deficits. Even though they live with all the terrible shit that stroke does to people, they were still able to reflect them do that. So post traumatic growth. This is basically in our lives every single day, they're happening all the time, we just got to look for that focus on that rather than focus on the negative aspects of it, because you get what you focus on.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:30

And no doubt about it. I can focus on all the negative stuff that strokes caused me, there's a ton of it. But if I focus on the positive things, there's just as much as that if not more. And what that does is that actually leads to down the track more positive things to come out of that, even though there's going to also still be bad days, or can't get up and move around as freely as I'd like to you know, I don't feel energetic to catch up with people where I lose my temper where I do all those things.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:01

And my stroke journey is not any navigating my kids with stroke, it's also navigating my parents with stroke, because they don't know how to respond, how to act, how to behave with their adult son, who's younger than them who shouldn't die before them may die.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:24

And now they're losing their shit over like somebody. And they're in a position where they are even more likely to not be able to influence the way that they

would love to just because they're in their 70s, they can't do a lot to support to help out in a way that they would have if I was a little child, and they were younger.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:49

So it's a real complex conversation, but one that really needs to happen. I mean, we're learning from children, according to the heading in your book, that's just a good way to say we're not really learning only from children. We're also learning from reflecting on our experience with parenthood. When we were being parented. And when later on, we become grandparents.

Bettina 1:08:16

Yeah, another dimension again.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:19

Yeah. And it's like, there's not just this one layer. You're learning from your children. Yeah, you are. I learned heaps from them. But I feel like I learned at the same time. More from my parents. When they were being parents that I wasn't aware of.

Bettina 1:08:38

Yeah, I totally agree. I know, there were moments where I would say something to my children. And I think, Oh, my God, I swore I would never say that to my kids. And then I'd think, Oh, hang on a minute. Why? Why am I saying that? And then I went oh, maybe that was what was happening for my parents to, oh, I've always been so mean about that thing.

Bettina 1:09:04

And I've always been so angry about it. But actually, when I think about it, and what they were doing at the time, and what they were managing at the time, I now understand why they did it. And so therefore, I can let go of that. I can go Oh, shoot. Okay, yeah, now, I get it, now I understand that.

Bettina 1:09:21

You know, that it's really interesting that you know, post traumatic growth you know, I feel really blessed at the time. It was very hard for me, but I had a one of my sport coaches who was really like a surrogate father. In fact, I probably for about five years of my life, spent more time with him than I did with my own father, who was very busy working and trying to manage life.

Bettina 1:09:43

And he got diagnosed when I was about 14 with lymphoma related to Agent Orange. So he'd been to the Vietnam War and got given a very severe prognosis. There was virtually nothing they could do by the time they diagnosed him.

Bettina 1:10:03

And he spent the next six years really battling that they gave him six months, he got six years. And because we were so close it, you know, I journeyed along that it was a real pivotal point for me, because he looked into all manner of alternative healing, because of course, medicine, were giving him nothing, they just basically said, get your affairs in order.

Bettina 1:10:32

So he explored all sorts of things, from the physical, to the spiritual, all of that stuff. And so everything he read, I read, so I'd read stuff in my teens, which was bizarre for a teenager to read. But it was fascinating to me. And I felt like it was my way of supporting him, and understanding what he was going through.

The Best Six Years

Bettina 1:10:49

And I'll never forget the last time I spoke to him, we knew, you know, his death was days away. He knew that. And I was sitting with him this one day. And I said, you know what, I said, there was a six in the number, but it was years, not months. And I'm really grateful for that six years, and I was telling him how grateful I was for him and all that I'd learned in that journey with him.

Bettina 1:11:17

And you know, it's a very emotional conversation, of course, because I knew it would probably be the last time I saw him. And he said something to me, which I'll never, ever forget. And it speaks to that growth piece and how your life can be different, even in the face of the worst adversity that you're facing.

Bettina 1:11:34

He said, I wouldn't have changed a thing. And this has been, you know, I've lived for I think it was 47 years, he said I've lived for 41 years before this. And none of it meant anything. This last six years has been the best six years of my life. And I walked away going at first I went, how is it possible you have been fighting for

every day.

Bettina 1:12:01

And yet, that stuck with me. And I, you know, I cannot tell you in times where I've had shit going on times when illnesses impacted my life in some way. That comes back to me so powerfully. And I really think that that formed a mindset of growth. For me, that is indelible. It's such a power, you know, people, people who coach with me often laugh at me, because they say.

Bettina 1:12:30

Well, if there's a silver lining to this shitstorm, you'll find it. And I think that's just that growth part of me that says there's always some place that this is going to teach me. And in the fullness of time, I may even be able to appreciate it. Which is it's such a blessing. But I know that that was the point where that got switched on. Well, and truly.

Bettina 1:12:51

And that's, I mean, back then we didn't even have that languaging. It was just a growth mindset. People didn't even talk about that. In fact, I must look up and see if Carol Dweck's book had been written by then. Because it was you know, and it was one of those moments.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:09

Carol Dweck's book's right here as well. All these things are right on my radar right now. And I don't believe it was and I'm pretty sure Carol Dweck's book was first published in 2006.

Bettina 1:13:26

Ah, no, definitely not. No, it was years before that. So yeah, so now I look back at that, and I go, that I'll never ever forget, you know, those moments in your life where you can just you can be back there like that and go, I can remember his face. And I remember sitting there having that conversation.

Bettina 1:13:47

He was medicated. And so it was one of those. It was like, his eyes suddenly became clear, and he delivered this wisdom. And I went, I'm astounded by what you've just said. And it literally is really informed so much of my life. And I'm, you know, that's a massive blessing. God, I can't tell you how many times I've thought about that when I was a parent.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:13

Hopefully, what we've done in this episode is just put out there two versions of raising children, some of the challenges that we've all had and some of the ways that we're still getting a wrong sometimes getting a ride, trying you know, relearning redoing, and just to give people a break in their relationship with their children and, and how much they might be doing themselves a disservice by being hard on themselves, especially during stroke recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:47

Because I was doing that to me. I was really giving myself a hard time for missing out on critical moments in my child's life that I'm never going to be able to get back which was like camping and ticular holiday and a particular location and a particular event because I was too sick to go.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:05

And now they don't want to borrow of me. So I was really hard on myself for being sick, for God's sake like, I mean, I was not in control of that part of it. Nonetheless, what I also hope that we've achieved for the people listening is some of the language that we never had back then.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:28

That they may not have ever heard of up until today, post traumatic growth, you know, a positive mindset, emotional intelligence, hopefully, that's getting people's ears pricked up and going, Okay, what is this? Why do I need to know about it? How can I learn from it and implement it so that I am living the same life but from a different lens.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:53

And, and then hopefully, what I'm doing is imparting that wisdom, that knowledge on to my children, and I'm not having a personal, I'm not getting personally traumatized by the way, that they're responding to me, because it's not about me, it's about them. So that's my wish for the listener, the people that are listening, I'm so grateful that you came on to share this with me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:23

I wouldn't have been able to have this level of conversation with many other people that I personally know. And I really appreciate the fact that two years ago, you did the presentation that you did you put yourself out there, you wrote the

book, you gave me a copy. I remember then you asked for feedback. I don't know if you're expected to get feedback two years later. But that's how I roll sometimes sometimes it takes me two years to get back to somebody.

Bettina 1:16:57

You know, and that's the thing about this work is I knew I had to do it. I just I didn't know how it was going to impact if you'd said to me that we would be doing these podcasts, I would have said really? Oh, I'm not sure how that connects. But it does, it means something, you know, and you know, it's just thinking, I'd love for the listeners to hear the wisdom through my son.

Bettina 1:17:18

When they are beating themselves up. He's to come along at the end of my workshops and speak to the audience. And they could ask any question they liked. And for me that was that transparency, right? That you can take my word for it or he's the actual goods, right. And he used to say to them, I want to reassure you, that the parents I got were the ones I needed, not the ones I wanted.

Bettina 1:17:44

And that was the best thing that ever happened to me, I have become who I am because of what they brought the good, the bad, the ugly. And I'm grateful for that. And I you know, I really want the listeners to hear that if they're struggling, you know, with the parenting and they are beating themselves up understand that.

Bettina 1:18:04

There is purpose somewhere, there is a reason why your parenting, even with all the warts and all that we bring to that interaction. There's a reason for it. And one day, they'll understand the reason for it. And if we're blessed, we'll see it too. But maybe not.

Bettina 1:18:21

Maybe not in this lifetime, you know, we might be gone before that fullness actually happens. But I think it's about trusting that you are there because of who you are. And they have come to you for that exact reason. So, you know, you can put the stick down and trust that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:18:40

Yeah, the book is called Learning From Children: New Ways Of Approaching The

Challenges In Your Life. Bettina if people wanted to get in touch or reach out to you where is the best way for them to do that?

Bettina 1:18:52

And they can just jump on the website learningfromchildren.com. And on all the social. So if you put Bettina Tornatora one of the blessings of having an unusual name is that there aren't many of us out there. So if you put that into Instagram, or Facebook or LinkedIn, you'll find me look for my curly head picture.

Bettina 1:19:12

And yeah, reach out. You know, that's so important. Just reach out, even if it's just to say, Hey, have you got another resource? Or can you put me in touch with someone on here? I'm really willing to do that. So yeah, please do.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:26

Thank you so much for being on the podcast.

Bettina 1:19:28

Pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:30

Well, thanks so much for joining us. On today's episode. You ever wish there was just one place to go to for resources, advice and support in stroke recovery? Whether you've been navigating your journey for weeks, months or years, I know firsthand how difficult it can be to get the answers you need.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:48

This road is both physically and mentally challenging from reclaiming your independence to getting back to work to rebuilding your confidence and more. The symptoms don't follow a rulebook and as soon as you leave the hospital you no longer have a medical professionals on top.

Bill Gasiamis 1:20:03

I know for me it was as if I was teaching myself a new language from scratch with no native speaker insight. If this sounds like you, I'm here to tell you that you're not alone and there is a better way to navigate your recovery and build a fulfilling life that you love. I've created an inclusive, supportive and accessible membership community called recovery after stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 1:20:26

This all in one support and Resource Program is designed to help you take your health into your own hands. This is your guidebook through every step in your journey from reducing fatigue to strengthening your brain health, to overcoming anxiety and more. To find out more and to join the community. Just head to recoveryafterstroke.com See you on the next episode.

Intro 1:20:47

Importantly, we present many podcasts designed to give you an insight and understanding into the experiences of other individuals opinions and treatment protocols discussed during any podcast are the individual's own experience and we do not necessarily share the same opinion nor do we recommend any treatment protocol discussed.

Intro 1:21:04

All content on this website at any linked blog, podcast or video material controlled this website or content is created and produced for informational purposes only and is largely based on the personal experience of Bill Gasiamis the content is intended to complement your medical treatment and support healing.

Intro 1:21:21

It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice and should not be relied on as health advice the information is general and may not be suitable for your personal injuries, circumstances or health objectives did not use our content as a standalone resource to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease for therapeutic purposes or is a substitute for the advice of a health professional.

Intro 1:21:42

Never delay seeking advice or disregard the advice of a medical professional, your doctor or your rehabilitation program based on our content. If you have any questions or concerns about your health or medical condition, please seek guidance from a doctor or other medical professional if you are experiencing a health emergency or think you might be call 000 in Australia or your local emergency number immediately for emergency assistance or go to the nearest hospital emergency department.

Intro 1:22:06

Medical information changes constantly. While we aim to provide current quality

information in our content. We did not provide any guarantees and assume no legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, currency or completeness of the content. If you choose to rely on any information within our content, you do so solely at your own risk. We are careful with links we provide however third party links from our website are followed at your own risk and we are not responsible for any information you find there.