

From Pediatric Stroke To Gold Medalist | Anthony Bryan

Understanding Pediatric Stroke

Pediatric stroke, a relatively uncommon but critical medical condition, refers to the interruption of blood supply to a child's brain, leading to brain cell damage. Despite its rarity, pediatric stroke can have severe consequences and necessitates prompt recognition and intervention.

Introduction

Pediatric stroke is often misunderstood due to its infrequency and lack of awareness. This article aims to delve deeper into this condition, exploring its types, causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and preventive measures.

Understanding Pediatric Stroke

Pediatric stroke occurs when there's a disruption in blood flow to a child's brain, resulting in brain tissue damage. Unlike adult strokes, which can be caused by factors like hypertension or atherosclerosis, pediatric strokes commonly stem from congenital heart diseases or blood disorders.

Types of Pediatric Stroke

There are different types of pediatric stroke, including ischemic stroke caused by a blocked blood vessel, hemorrhagic stroke due to bleeding in the brain, and transient ischemic attacks (TIAs) that result in temporary disruptions of blood flow.

Causes and Risk Factors

Various factors contribute to pediatric stroke, encompassing congenital heart defects, sickle cell disease, infections, head trauma, and blood clotting disorders.

Understanding these risk factors is crucial for timely diagnosis and intervention.

Signs and Symptoms

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of pediatric stroke is pivotal. These may include seizures, sudden weakness or numbness in the face or limbs, difficulty speaking, severe headaches, and loss of balance or coordination.

Diagnosing Pediatric Stroke

Diagnosing pediatric stroke involves a thorough medical history review, neurological examinations, imaging tests like MRI or CT scans, and blood tests to determine the underlying cause.

Treatment Options

Treatment varies based on the type and severity of the stroke. Immediate medical attention is vital to restore blood flow and prevent further damage. Treatments may include medications, surgeries, or rehabilitation therapies.

Rehabilitation and Recovery

Rehabilitation plays a significant role in a child's recovery post-stroke, focusing on physical, speech, and occupational therapies to regain lost skills and functions.

Long-term Effects

Pediatric stroke can have lasting effects on a child's physical and cognitive abilities. Understanding and addressing these long-term consequences are crucial for ongoing care and support.

Preventive Measures

While some risk factors for pediatric stroke cannot be altered, preventive measures like managing underlying health conditions, promoting a healthy lifestyle, and regular medical check-ups can significantly reduce the risk.

Coping Strategies for Families

Families coping with a child's stroke need support and guidance. Strategies involve seeking professional help, joining support groups, and fostering an environment conducive to the child's recovery.

Support and Resources

Accessing relevant resources and support networks is essential for families navigating through the challenges of pediatric stroke. From educational materials to specialized care centers, ample resources can aid in the journey toward recovery.

Conclusion

Pediatric stroke, though rare, requires vigilance and prompt action. Understanding its nuances, from diagnosis to long-term effects, is crucial in providing optimal care and support to affected children and their families.

FAQs

Is pediatric stroke common?

- Pediatric stroke is relatively rare but requires immediate attention due to its serious implications.

What are the signs of pediatric stroke?

- Signs may include sudden weakness, seizures, difficulty speaking, severe headaches, and balance issues.

Can pediatric stroke be prevented?

- While some risk factors are uncontrollable, managing underlying health conditions can reduce the risk.

What treatment options are available for pediatric stroke?

- Treatments include medications, surgeries, and rehabilitation therapies tailored to the child's needs.

How can families cope with a child's stroke?

- Seeking professional support, joining support groups, and accessing resources can assist families in coping with this challenge.

The Interview

Anthony Bryan was 6 when he had a stroke that left him with left-side hemiplegia. At 25 he became a para running champion.

Instagram

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Anthony Bryan 00:00

In 2012, I got to the Paralympic trials, which was at the Olympic Stadium. The top three get selected to go to Great Britain for the Paralympics. And I finished fourth. So just missed out. But this was an incredible experience for me because this was in front of a big crowd of people. I was racing against the top guys.

Anthony Bryan 00:22

And even though I finished fourth, I was disappointed, but I was like, just gave me more fire, I was like, I want to make sure I get there next time, I want to put more training to make sure that I can achieve something.

Anthony Bryan 00:34

So I went to my coach and I said, I want to make sure I get there next time. So she said, Okay, so you're a bit slower than the others at the start line because of your left side weakness. So why don't we try something a little longer distance? Why don't we try 100 meters and 1500 meters because I've never gone that far? My reaction was that 1500 meters that sounds like a million miles. I can't do that.

Intro 01:02

This is the Recovery after Stroke podcast. With Bill Gasiamis, helping you navigate recovery after stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 01:14

Hello, and welcome to the Recovery after Stroke podcast, my new book, The Unexpected Way That Stroke Became the Best Thing That Happened is now available on Amazon links to where you can purchase or in the show notes and the YouTube description.

01:29 Introduction - Anthony Bryan



Bill Gasiamis 01:29

Thank you to all those people who have already purchased a copy. I hope the book gives you an insight into some things that you can do to make your stroke recovery a little better. This is episode 282. And my guest today is Anthony Bryan, who by the age of six was already a brain tumor survivor and stroke survivor. And since then has become an international para-athlete two times as World Games champion in both the 800 and 1500 meter run, and a motivational speaker.

Anthony Bryan, welcome to the podcast.

Anthony Bryan 02:06

Thank you for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 02:08

Good to have you here. Tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

02:12 Pediatric Stroke

Anthony Bryan 02:12

So I was a very sporty active child always running around always playing football. And I began to get these bad headaches. And I went from being running around and active over time to being very lethargic and always kind of curling up in a ball and holding my head. And the only way I could describe these headaches was like someone's screeching or screaming inside my head.

Anthony Bryan 02:38

And when my parents brought me to the doctors, doctors said it was just migraines. And here's some medication, you'll be okay. But these headaches kind of got worse and worse. So my parents thought this wasn't right. And they took me to the hospital to have a deeper look into this. So I had a brain scan, and what they found was I had a brain tumor the size of a tennis ball.

Anthony Bryan 03:03

So six-year-olds' heads, probably about the size of your hand, and tennis balls worrying about the size of your fist. So pretty big brain tumor. And what they found was this brain tumor is shutting down my vital organs. So they had to operate it on as quickly as possible to remove this tumor because it was shutting down my vital organs and I wouldn't have survived.

Anthony Bryan 03:23

During the operation to remove the tumor, suffered a stroke. So I lost the use of my left side. So I'd gone into the operation fully active, able-bodied, normal life, and I came out totally different, completely changed, my life turned upside down. Doctors weren't quite sure what happened. They couldn't understand what happened, why I lost the use of my left side and they looked into it and it was a stroke.

Anthony Bryan 03:57

So I had to relearn how to live life is worn out and I had to relearn how to walk again. I was wheelchair-bound for six months. And already, all I wanted to do was just be active and be your normal child a child was to run around playing in the modern running around their friends. And I just remember sitting in the wheelchair and starting to hate who I was and kind of started to think to myself, I wish I'd never survived this operation. Why am I still here? I hate who I am kind of presenting myself.

Bill Gasiamis 04:36

How old were you?

Anthony Bryan 04:38

I was only six years old.

Bill Gasiamis 04:39

So at six you went through the whole thing and then by six years, you're already having this existential crisis. And you're already in a situation where life is shit and you know your identity is lost and you don't know how to interact with the world. Man, that's a lot for a six-year-old to handle, especially after being diagnosed with a brain tumor, and then having brain surgery, and then going through all the stuff, you went through some tests.

Anthony Bryan 04:53

Yes, so I remember having to have needle injections every single day, where, you know, chart 667-year-old was probably playing with their action man or playing football in the garden. I remember lying in a hospital bed, being stabbed with needles, every day, several times a day. And I just didn't understand what was happening to me.

Anthony Bryan 05:37

And I do remember being hating myself and who I'd become. I also remember like, I had to have a year of school to recover. And when I was allowed to go back to school, I was the only disabled kid in the whole school. No, never met disabled person, I've never met a disabled person before. And gone, I became very shy and self-conscious, so I couldn't use one arm.

Anthony Bryan 06:04

So I used to wear a big coat either in the summer, to try and hide my arm, or I'd

sit in the back of the class to try and hide not hide away. Because I was embarrassed of who I was. And I remember one of my PE lessons, we had a we're football lesson. So I was like, oh, go go. And the teacher said to me, you can't go and go, you need two hands to go and go.

Anthony Bryan 06:29

And so just kind of stayed away from sport as well. So my confidence levels plummeted. And yeah, we're very shy and self-conscious. And yeah, but, at that young age, I was having suicidal thoughts. I was like, I don't want to be alive anymore. Why am I here kind of thing?

Bill Gasiamis 06:50

You know, had you had the opportunity to be a goalkeeper in your condition, you probably would have let a few goals through.

Anthony Bryan 07:01

Yes, but I was also because I could only use one hand, I was better, and the other kids reacted with one hand. So in a way, I adapted very well. It wasn't until I got into secondary school that they had a PE teacher. We were doing a fitness lesson, he had a run around the football pitch. How many times do you do it in 12 minutes?

Anthony Bryan 07:31

And all I remember thinking to myself was Do not let the overweight, lazy kids go past you do not be the last one. To finish this. There'll be even more embarrassing and demoralizing. So I just said to myself, just keep pushing yourself, keep pushing yourself. And I have a class of about 60 finished around about 30.

Bill Gasiamis 07:59

Just take you back to what I said. I want to take you back to what I said about going through. It's what the teacher was thinking, right? There's no way this guy's gonna be able to be a goalkeeper. It's gonna lead to miracles. And he doesn't want to, he doesn't want you to participate for the sake of participating at what age what is that? Would that have been?

Anthony Bryan 08:22

That was still in my primary school. So that would have been like, eight years old, nine years old.

Bill Gasiamis 08:28

Right? And he's thinking maybe, he's gonna let too many girls in, or maybe it's going to be a difficult experience for him. And he's probably trying to protect you. Or who knows what, right? But that's the thing about that's the thing about people who are able-bodied, who don't understand.

Anthony Bryan 08:50

Especially, especially in the 1990s. disability was seen as you can't do this, and you can't do that. Because no one had ever seen it done before. Napnap nowadays, you're seeing a lot more done by people with disabilities and people instead of saying you can't do this, and you can't do that, and putting you in your box. People are saying well actually, there's this guy over here and he can do this. So maybe if he can do it, then maybe you can as well. And it's kind of a bit more open-minded now.

Bill Gasiamis 09:20

The Paralympics, I think help when it comes to showcasing the ability of people with disability to achieve something. Yes.

Anthony Bryan 09:32

Yeah, and when, unfortunately, when I was a kid, no one ever heard of the Paralympics. So you just come out into the public really and have been publicized since 2012.

Bill Gasiamis 09:47

We in Australia here we could be you know, if somebody achieved something in sport, it doesn't matter what kind of sport it is. It doesn't matter if it's training a fly to beat another fly in a walking race or something. If you achieve something in sport, it doesn't matter what your background is, doesn't matter how many arms legs, what your abilities are, you're a national hero.

Bill Gasiamis 10:12

So it's a really good way for people to enter that national heroes status, you know, if you can just achieve something good in a sport, it does not matter what the sport looks like, how many people attend that sport, but if you can say, I'm a champion, and then you get to multiple champions, everybody's on all over you to promote it.

Bill Gasiamis 10:34

And that's been good. We've had the most recent champion that I'm aware of Dylan Olcott, who was and still is kind of like the most are has won the most events in wheelchair tennis than almost anybody in Australia ever. But, but also really, up there in the world rankings. And Dylan's all over everything because that's what we do, we just put all our, all our sports heroes, on top of everything.

Bill Gasiamis 11:10

And what he's been able to do is raise awareness about the fact that people who have disabilities can participate in sport, that looks a little different than sport for people who are able-bodied. But that doesn't matter. It's still a sport, and it's still participation.

Bill Gasiamis 11:30

And then you get everything out of that event as if you would have if you were, quote-unquote, able-bodied doesn't make a difference at all. The only difference is that guys are sitting down in a chair instead of standing up on the court. That's the only difference.

Anthony Bryan 11:47

Exactly. Everyone should embrace everyone for achieving something and support each other.

Bill Gasiamis 11:55

That teacher, if he says, what you're up to these days, do you think it would be kind of a good way to sort of bring people on your side is to sort of do the things that you've been able to do and kind of try and bring people along gently and just show possibility rather than inability?

Anthony Bryan 12:22

Yes, I kind of also it's kind of showing that people are always going to say to you, throughout life could be in anything that they're going to try and enforce their opinions on you and say, You can't do this, and you can't do that. But that's just their opinion.

Anthony Bryan 12:37

And it's up to you and only, you know, whether you can do it or you can't and it's only down to you if you're willing to give it that effort and try and do it that you're only going to find out. So it's kind of like he told me that I couldn't do this, and it couldn't do that. But I was determined to prove him wrong.

Bill Gasiamis 12:56

Do you feel like people who are less able-bodied get the “you can’t do this thing” more often?

Anthony Bryan 13:07

I would say so quite a lot. Yeah. Especially as I find after being in the hospital, the medical professionals are very quick to kind of put you in your box a bit like saying, Oh, I’m sorry, sir, this has happened to you, and this happened to you, you’re no longer going to be able to do this or do that.

Anthony Bryan 13:30

And that, that’s, that’s not there. They’re not trying to be horrible. But that’s just the way that they’ve gotten their education. And they’re trying to put you in this category. When in fact they could do or they’re not trained to say, this has happened to you. But there are these options that you could do this and you could do that they’re kind of just giving you the option of what you haven’t got any more. What you can’t do anymore.

Bill Gasiamis 13:58

Are they perhaps living through what they believe wouldn’t be possible for them? If they were in the same situation unknowingly? then transferring that or sort of attempting a in a bad way to protect you and say, you won’t be able to do that don’t bother trying then get disappointed.

Anthony Bryan 14:23

Yeah, they don’t give you too many high hopes.

Bill Gasiamis 14:26

What is it about that you think that it’s not worth giving somebody hope and that what we should do is take hope away and crush their hope?

Anthony Bryan 14:37

It’s a tough one because some people will listen to what the doctor has to say and think to themselves, or a doctor says I’ll never be able to do this. So I’m not going to be able to I’m no point even trying. So and doctor said to my parents, you’ll probably never walk or be very active again. And I ended up being able to run and push myself more than most able-bodied people can.

Bill Gasiamis 15:03

Did your appearance buy into that for any length of time? Did they get sucked into that sort of rhetoric?

Anthony Bryan 15:12

I think maybe at the beginning, yes, because I was wheelchair-bound at the beginning. But I was a very like, determined stubborn child. If someone said to me, you weren't meant to do this, I'd be like, Yes, I can. So I kind of, I forced myself to kind of stand up and try and move my legs when I couldn't, things like that. I had two younger brothers that are very competitive.

Anthony Bryan 15:39

So if I wasn't gonna be able to keep up with them, and I can't let my younger brothers get the better of me, I'm the older brother. So they think they have helped me a lot in my recovery. When we played football in the garden, if you if you're not going to be as good your guiding goal straightaway, so being competitive with them helped me in my recovery a lot.

Brain tumor surgery and its impact on childhood development

Bill Gasiamis 16:06

It's a tough thing for anyone to go through at any age, but it's six. I mean, you're so young and naive, before they found the brain tumor. And then after that, is this a completely different life and version of you? Do you have recollections of your transition from being a child to being thrust into a child-like adulthood, because you got to deal with things at six that most people won't have to deal with? What for me, for example, until I was 37,

Anthony Bryan 16:54

I had to grow up very quickly. While most kids were playing with their toys, or dolls, or whatever I was, in hospital beds, having injection operations. I do remember, I remember everything going from all hospital appointments. I remember the headaches as a kid. I didn't remember a lot of it. And I remember so nowadays, you have stitches that after the operation, they just dissolved. But back then they had stitches that were pretty much just staples.

Anthony Bryan 17:33

And so I had fingers 24 staples down the side of my head. And I remember they're saying, we're not going to put you out to sleep for this, we're going to take take the stitches out. And I remember screaming and crying and begging them to stop because they had tweezers and they were pulling the staples out.

Anthony Bryan 17:56

And I was bawling my eyes and tears, where a normal child might cry when they fall over and crease their grades their leg. I'm having to weave to withstand this pain. And that's when I remember that pain has been the worst ever. But going through that pain made me stronger later in life. I have a very high pain tolerance, which kind of helps me in sports.

Bill Gasiamis 18:27

Right, so we've got that in common I had man more than 30 or 40 stitches, and staples in my head as well. I don't remember if I had counted them once. But because I've got a photo of it. And they did pull the staples out as well.

Bill Gasiamis 18:47

So they had to, they had two types of stitches. There were the dissolving ones. And then there were staples on top though, kind of, and then I went to the hospital to have a meth I didn't realize they were going to just yank them out as well. And it was quite annoying because my head was sensitive. I'm sensitive personally around my head.

Bill Gasiamis 19:14

Yeah, you just had brain surgery, you know, you're recovering, you're it's not the best thing to do. And it's especially not and I can deal with it. 30 at 40 years old, like I can cope. Alright, a little bit of pain, it'll be fine. But as a six-year-old, I can't imagine, you know what I would have gone through I cannot remember, that part of my life like being 6789 10 years old.

Bill Gasiamis 19:40

If it wasn't for a couple of photos that my mom had, I wouldn't have any idea. I've got some sense of my formative years and what I was like at school who I played with what some of my issues were and what some of my strengths were but I don't have a deep memory about something that happened as '60s All because it didn't go through anything that dramatic. So. So it's interesting how, how that event kind of enabled you to have a real deep memory of what it was like to be

you were six years old.

Anthony Bryan 20:20

Yeah, I was gonna say, I can say that I think that, that they do, they do say that between the ages of kind of one and eight is when you develop your kind of character, and who you are as a person. So most kids are doing their childlike things and playing around, I was kind of living in survival mode, getting through all this pain and I won't ever ever remember back to my childhood, all I remember is hospital appointments and lots of pain.

Anthony Bryan 21:03

And I always said to myself, as I got older, I didn't go through all that pain and trauma just to live an ordinary life, I want to live the best life I can for that young liberal child. So I will be a success now, for that child who had all those dreams and aspirations before.

Bill Gasiamis 21:23

Yeah, that's a good thing to be. That's a good way to look at life for that. younger self like to give that younger self. The What is it is that the not the respect but to give your younger self the

Anthony Bryan 21:41

the is that when you're a child, you're you want to be, I want to be a professional sports player, I want to be an astronaut, I will be a pop star, whatever. And then this kind of trauma happened and it just per an end to all of that. I always said to myself, important imagine if that six-year-old before the tumor had had a time machine and went forward 30 years and he looked at his life. I went to look around like, oh my god, wow, is that me? Say I'd made that little child proud.

Bill Gasiamis 22:20

And that little child then is gonna go through some of that stuff a little bit easier, less stressed, less worried, less concerned.

Anthony Bryan 22:28

that maybe we're gonna go through this pain, but it's gonna be worth it in the end because I know in the future, I've got this successful life.

Anthony Bryan: overcoming disability and achieving athletic success



Bill Gasiamis 22:44

Now I'm on your Instagram, and I've been reading your little blurb about yourself. Left Hemi motivational speaker, brain tumor survivor, and stroke survivor. International power athlete two times a World Games champion in 800 meters and 1500 meters. Tell me about those events.

Anthony Bryan 23:06

And so so after that fitness test in my secondary school and beating Half past the students, my PE teacher went up to me and said, Wow, that was incredible. Have you ever thought about going to the Paralympics? And my reaction was was the Paralympics? And he said it's like the Olympics. But for people with disabilities, you'd be great at it, you got some real fine determination in you.

Anthony Bryan 23:37

So straight away, my reaction was no way. I don't want to do that. Why would I want to do a sport that shows off my disability for something I don't want to do I was hiding it as it was my big coat and trying to hide away and just blend in as I could. So she said, let me speak to your parents.

Anthony Bryan 23:57

And my parents picked me up that evening. And she came over and she's the first one she said was yet that boy in a running club. And my parents will Okay. Never

before that before, but we'll give that a try. So, I went along to my first ever running race, and it was an all-disability athletic race competition. I've never met anyone or any other person with a disability because I went to an able-bodied school and I would always have to play keep up with them or catch up with them.

Anthony Bryan 24:28

And for once I was looking around and all these athletes were going out there to do the best they possibly could some might be missing an arm while some might be missing a leg or in a wheelchair. And no it was giving each other funny local jobs and each other or going out there to give the best possible performance they could.

Anthony Bryan 24:46

I ended up winning gold medals in the 100 meters and 200 meters and this just kind of opened up my eyes to disability where I was like, I've been shy and self-conscious and hiding away all the time and ever on here, just going out there and being the best they can be. So this inspired me. So I thought I wouldn't have been part of this. I won't do more of this. So I joined the running club and started doing more races and competitions.

Intro 25:13

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 recover? What things should I avoid? In case I make matters worse, and doctors will explain things that, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask.

Intro 25:38

If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation, stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you it's called Seven Questions to Ask Your Doctor about your Stroke.

Intro 25:57

These seven questions are the ones Bill wished he'd asked when he was recovering from a stroke, they'll not only help you better understand your condition, they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery, head to the website. Now, recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide. It's free.

Anthony Bryan 26:16

And in 2012, I got to the Paralympics trials, which was at the Olympic Stadium. The tip-top three get selected to go to Great Britain for the Paralympics. And I finished fourth. So I just missed out. But this was an incredible experience for me because this was in front of big crowds of people. I was racing against the top guys. And even though I finished fourth at this point, I was like, just gave me more fire.

Anthony Bryan 26:46

I was like, I want to make sure I get there next time I want to put more training in on and make sure that I can achieve something. So I went to my coach and I said I want to make sure I get there next time. So she said, Okay, so you're a bit slower than the others at the start line because of your left side weakness.

Anthony Bryan 27:05

So why don't we try something a little longer distance? Why don't we try 100 meters and 1500 meters? But my goodness, I've never gone that far. My reaction was, what? 1500 meters? That sounds like a million miles. I can't do that. I'm struggling to do 200 meters. But she said to me, Well, how would you know if you've never tried?

Anthony Bryan 27:28

So give it a go. And then see how you get on. So I joined the distance group. And our first training session was like running 400 meters, you have a few minutes to rest, and you do this 10 times. And I remember I was in this group, mainly girls, we set off running at the same time.

Anthony Bryan 27:48

And I remember even like the girls half the size of me that are like six, seven years old, which is flying past me. And I was at the back of the group. And I was like, This is so embarrassing. Even the little little girls are going past me. And I hated it so much. But I made sure I did rep after rep and I just wanted to do the session and not don't want to stop because that'd be even more embarrassing.

Anthony Bryan 28:11

So I finished the session and my coach went, so how did it go? And I was like, terrible. The little ones were going past me I was able to back just embarrassing. I hate not being good at something. So she's she said to me, Well, you can't

expect to go in there and be the absolute best at it. Those guys have been training for years.

Anthony Bryan 28:34

You can't expect to go in there and be the better than they are and you haven't even put in the work yet. She said to give it a go for a month. And if you still hate it, you can always go back to sprinting. So I was like, Okay, I'll give it a go.

Anthony Bryan 28:46

After a few weeks, I started getting fitter started getting stronger, I started believing in myself more, I was going from the back of the group, it's in the middle of the group. So the middle group to near the front of the group.

Anthony Bryan 28:57

And these are kind of able-bodied girls, so I'm keeping up with them, which is kind of a good pace. And then I started going to competitions and started winning medals. In 2015, I got selected to represent England and the Cerebral Palsy World Games, which was in Barcelona, and ended up winning two gold medals in the 800 meters and 1500 years.

Anthony Bryan 29:20

And this was a moment where my kind of confidence started to grow because I thought I shouldn't be shy about myself. I'm now a double world champion. And people I remember being there and like, young kids are asking for my autograph and I wasn't used to it. So I was like, Wow, that's so special. That made me feel really good. I was like Wow, that makes you feel cool.

Accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities



Bill Gasiamis 29:47

That's awesome.

Anthony Bryan 29:50

That was kind of a change in my life because I thought I was told as a kid I would never be very active again. And now, I'm a double world champion in the 100 and 1500s. So, began thinking to myself I can do things, what am I capable of this, try and find out what I really can do.

Anthony Bryan 30:16

So it's just like fist-pushing myself physically in the gym, running training. And I just started learning that I was getting fitter and stronger. Part of my peer group and my mates who didn't do much sport were all able-bodied, and I was stronger and fitter than them. And I was like, How was this possible?

Bill Gasiamis 30:41

Because the mindset is, war has been so different up until then, you know, like, it just hasn't been, we've come a long way, in the last 30 years, since, yes, your experience. And by that, I'm talking about society as a whole has come a long way.

Bill Gasiamis 31:04

Just understand that, if you make it possible for people, to attend an event, like if you create some of the things that they need to be there, or a wheelchair ramp, for example, then then you've solved 99.9% of the problems, all you got to do is make it accessible so that the people can arrive there.

Bill Gasiamis 31:31

And then they can participate if the court is there. And then there is a toilet, for example, for people who need disabled toilets, and a ramp for people who need wheelchair access and all those different things. There's not much extra that's required to make it possible for people who live with disability to participate and to attend.

Bill Gasiamis 31:57

I know in the football stadiums here, and there. I remember back in the day, you never used to see chairs or spaces for wheelchairs. Well, now you do know there's, in every level, in every bay of every stadium, there's a wheelchair accessible base, where people can get a lift up, or go up the ramp, and park their wheelchair, next one, a couple of other wheelchairs and sit and enjoy an event.

Bill Gasiamis 32:29

And it's what it means is taking seats out rather than having to buy seats and install them, it's just not putting them there. And then marking the space with blue paint or with orange paint, or yellow paint, or whatever it is just so that people know what that space is allocated for and you're in. It's so simple.

Bill Gasiamis 32:50

So we see that now on public transport here in Melbourne. All of the tram, the trams that we have, previously, you had to get up to in three steps to get into the tram. And then the tram doors weren't wide enough so that people with a wheelchair could get in and use the tram. Whereas now the doors are double-width.

Disability caused by Pediatric Stroke and overcoming obstacles through self-belief

Bill Gasiamis 33:12

And every tram stop is starting to build platforms that are at the same level as you would at a train station that is at the same level as the door. So the person all they have to do is get to the tram stop push themselves in and then go to a space in the tram where the seats have been removed. And they could just park their wheelchair there. And when they're not there, people can stand there. And it's such a it seems like such a simple thing.

Bill Gasiamis 33:42

But able-bodied people take a while to get to that stage because they can't picture themselves being in that situation and having to get to work or having to get to an appointment or whatever. That makes people more independent and more able to participate and be active members of the community just because one of your legs doesn't work or one of your arms doesn't work while both of your legs do work doesn't mean you can't fully active member in a community and live a life to the fullest.

Bill Gasiamis 34:16

It's just ridiculous that it meant that and even now we are here stroke survivors all toxic some stroke survivors who had a stroke recently and the doctor said you probably won't walk again. Yeah, only 20 It's insane that it happens but it does still happen. And part of what the Paralympics does is prove everybody or the naysayers wrong is what it does.

Bill Gasiamis 34:45

And then hopefully it encourages young kids, young, old people, elderly, whatever, it doesn't matter what heavily encourages people to go. What the hell I'm going to just turn up and give it a go. Nobody's looking at me at the time. Are Olympics there's plenty of other people to look at if, if that's what we're going to do if we're going to look at people with disabilities and think they're different or they're different, what's not going to happen at the Paralympics? Everyone's the same different.

Anthony Bryan 35:14

Well, I spoke to one lady before and she was like, I prefer watching the Paralympics the Olympics and I said, Oh, really was that? She goes, Well, if you think about it, the Olympians train hard and they diet but that's what that's all they do. The Paralympians, have to train hard diet, and train as much as the Olympians, but with an added difficulty.

Anthony Bryan 35:39

And they're gonna have to do all these kinds of massage and rehab to help all those different kinds of parts of the body that overcompensating so the Paralympics have put an extra amount of work that the Olympian would do so. So you know, that's why I find it more impressive.

Bill Gasiamis 35:57

Yeah, I find it impressive, because it's, it's humans going, you know, despite what everyone expects of me. And despite what everyone said, I wouldn't be able to do I'm going to prove them wrong. And then they end up doing it. And it's simply because they believe in themselves. That's all it is.

Anthony Bryan 36:15

Exactly, yeah. That's how everyone should think about life. Yeah, this might be a fork in the road in my life. But it's not the end. There's this a different pathway. And there are always different pathways around every kind of difficult part of your life. Doesn't mean it's the end.

Bill Gasiamis 36:36

Yep. I interviewed very, very early on in the podcast. In Episode 106, I interviewed Kelly Studebaker, who was the first person I'd met, who was hemiplegic. And she was a powerlifter, and still is the powerlifter, I believe. And if you see the image of Kelly, she's got one side of her body, which is the effective side, which is like, skinny, right? And the other side, which is like, massive in general, and powerlifter size, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 37:15

And it was such a cool episode. She was the first person I spoke to who just kind of goes, Well, I think I want to do weight training or lifting or something. And then somebody said to her, Well, why don't you do powerlifting and she said, Okay, and that's it. And then she went down the powerlifting journey.

Bill Gasiamis 37:36

And she's got, and she's got photos of herself, doing other things like knitting scarves, and knitting, you know, hats and all that kind of stuff. And then she's got powerlifting photos, she's the most, it was the most unbelievable thing to see that that was possible because for me, I'm, I look completely normal.

Bill Gasiamis 38:01

I have left-side deficits, so my left side doesn't work the way my right side does. 100% But I avoided the gym, I hated going to the gym because it would remind me of how weak my left side is, or how much more of an effort I had to put in with my left side. And when I went to the gym, all it did was remind me that the risk was greater than I was looking for the problems.

Bill Gasiamis 38:29

If I lift the bar over my head my left side, fatigues quicker because it does almost two or three reps, and my left side is done. I was always concerned that it would fall on me that I would not be able to you know, do a benchpress properly or whatever. And I never did it. Whereas Kelly just goes I'm gonna go and do it.

Bill Gasiamis 38:54

She just did it that's what was cool about listening to her overcome a lot of that stuff that she was experiencing because of the AVM that she had in her head she had a faulty blood vessel as well that person was similar to me, and then and she was like that we're gonna go do this. So it is good to see other people achieving things when they're not meant to have been achieving them according to some people.

Anthony Bryan 39:29

Exactly. I love I love hearing success stories because they show you that anyone is capable of achieving just go for it and just see how it goes. Don't be scared of not giving it a go kind of thing.

Bill Gasiamis 39:49

As a six-year-old, do you have that other support that you need? Perhaps the mental mental health support, psychological support, that kind of stuff? Was that a thing? When you were going through In 1996?

Anthony Bryan 40:03

My parents did get me counseling. But as a child, I did not want to do counseling, I hated it. And I refused to, like, correspond during it. So I did go to counseling sessions, but whenever she would ask, she goes, So how are you feeling like I'm fine. And if you try and talk to me about my props, I just wouldn't talk about it.

Anthony Bryan 40:28

So I kind of bottled it all, all my emotions up. I never talked about my disability. That's all a sport kind of was my savior because it gave me something to focus on. Other than that, other than sports, I was very shy, self-conscious, and embarrassed.

Anthony Bryan 40:50

As I got into my teenage years and started going out drinking with mates, I was super shy around girls. I thought No girl was going to be interested in me

because I'm the only disabled one. So I thought that self-consciousness was constantly with me. So maybe I probably needed to address that when I was quite young.

Bill Gasiamis 41:12

Did you start? Did you end up going and getting that help and sorting that stuff out? Or is it something that you haven't gotten around to?

Anthony Bryan 41:22

And it's probably something I do need to address. Really?

Bill Gasiamis 41:25

Hopefully still. Yeah. All right. I'm not laughing. I'm kind of nervous laughing. Because I didn't think that that's the answer you were gonna give? I don't know. I thought you would have said you when you went about it. But you're proving yourself wrong. A lot. Anyway. Right. So you've, you have overcome some of that stuff yourself. Anyway, you've

Anthony Bryan 41:47

Yeah, well, my sports side of life has excelled massively. But still, like, relationship-wise. I've probably been single, what, four years now. And even when it got I was mates now. My mates are quite confident they'll go and talk to girls. I won't talk to a girl. And she talks to me first because I don't know. Sometimes I might think, Oh, I don't want to bother her. She might not want to talk to someone who's disabled. That's, why I still have those kinds of thoughts in my head. I need that's something we need to address.

Bill Gasiamis 42:21

Right. Right. Okay. Because one part of you wants to do that. And engage with Yeah,

Anthony Bryan 42:28

Yeah. So there's still that self-consciousness inside of me. And where my confidence comes out is Spore, Jim, just kind of maybe socializing, that either self-consciousness comes, comes back into me.

Bill Gasiamis 42:49

And you've been in a relationship before?

Anthony Bryan 42:52

Yes, I've been in a few relationships. But I still just haven't got that confidence in myself. That should have, yeah,

Bill Gasiamis 43:04

Fair enough. Those relationships show you that once upon a time, you did have confidence in yourself. And you did get the outcome you were after? Did I prove that?

Anthony Bryan: Dating with a disability

Anthony Bryan 43:21

Either No. So I always I always went for relationships. And the girls that I would go for it would go because I wasn't that interested in it because if I got rejected, I didn't I didn't care. I never kind of approached any girls that I was interested in because I didn't want to get rejected

Bill Gasiamis 43:40

Sounds like a normal bloke. That's a normal thing.

Anthony Bryan 43:47

I avoided that all of my life. And sometimes I do think, what if I didn't? Well, if I just tried Winfrey? Who knows?

Bill Gasiamis 43:58

It's like playing sports. Just try who knows you might get exactly

Anthony Bryan 44:03

yeah, maybe so bring my sport. strategies into my social life?

Bill Gasiamis 44:10

Absolutely. Go for it. Officially. Officially, absolutely. You should just go for it, mate. Don't worry about podcasts

Anthony Bryan 44:20

in a few weeks. Yeah, I got a new relationship.

Bill Gasiamis 44:25

Why not? Why not? You should go for it. I mean, every person who likes somebody

is afraid of rejection and afraid of being told Look, I don't like you. I'm not interested in you or whatever. And it does not matter.

Anthony Bryan 44:40

What I always black I will I always blamed my disability, I think oh, she won't like me because I'm disabled. Yeah, that's nice. Don't blame my disability. That's not true.

Bill Gasiamis 44:54

I know what you can do. Take some of your middles and wear them around your neck. When you go out. I'm

Anthony Bryan 45:02

always on my neck. That's

Bill Gasiamis 45:06

a good icebreaker at least.

Anthony Bryan 45:09

Yeah. Yeah, that's a good idea.

Bill Gasiamis 45:13

You never know. I do understand where you're coming from. It does make sense. You've got that extra level of complexity that you add to that whole dating experience usually, it's just that she won't like me, I hate being rejected. But you've also got that other part that you think is, you know,

Anthony Bryan 45:33

I think I'm online dating is sometimes it can be such a bad thing. So it's Judge Donilon. datings. All about image. So I've had a few bad ones where I've put an image of me I think I was looking ripped one year, and I had just loved so many shorts on. Six Pack is out. And I matched with this girl on Tinder, and she messaged me as you go, I said, Hey, how are you?

Anthony Bryan 46:06

And she said, Oh, I'm only matched with you to tell you what a terrible job you've done on photoshopping your picture. And I was like, What do you mean, I don't even know how to use Photoshop.

Anthony Bryan 46:17

She goes, Well, you've made your one arm muscley and got six pack really good down one side. But you forgot to do the other side, I was like, No, I have a disability. And this, this, and this. And she was like, oh, and then she blocked me. And I was like, ah, that's harsh. Little things like that.

Bill Gasiamis 46:44

But is harsh. Yeah. How can you just connect with somebody purely to tell them they've done a bad job on Photoshop?

Anthony Bryan 46:56

But I did have a few other times where I thought, well, what if I don't put I have a disability on my profile? And I just act as a normal person. So I did that a few times. And I got talking to a few more girls and had a few more successes. And I went, I met up with a girl to go on a date. She was like, Oh my God, what happened to you? You've had a car crash. I was like, oh, no, I have a limp. And I can only use one arm.

Anthony Bryan 47:23

And she was like, oh, and that didn't go well after that. So I thought, okay, that doesn't work either. So I just need to be myself or my dating profile. And just say who I am, I have a year. So now my profile says, I have a stroke of a breach in Australia, branching, survive branching survivor, but I'm also a world champion in this and the world champion that in a motivational speaker.

Bill Gasiamis 47:56

I get it, that it'd be difficult to get people over the line. And most people on Tinder probably not looking for a deep connection with somebody initially, you know, yeah, out for different reasons. And then they, you know, being confronted with somebody who has a disability, when you're not expecting that would be would make them think all sorts of weird things.

Bill Gasiamis 48:22

Like, you know, what, I don't know what to say, how do I act around that person? Or? I haven't got any experience in this space. Or what will my friends say, you know, there'll be all sorts of shit going in their heads about the problem with interacting with somebody who's, who has a disability. And, and it comes from being naive afraid.

Bill Gasiamis 48:49

Perhaps having been using derogatory words towards people, you know, in the past as young kids, and they just have a way of going about life avoiding disability, because it's not common, even though there's plenty of people who have a disability, it's not common in quote-unquote, normal world, the normal world and then they kind of makes them look like an idiot.

Bill Gasiamis 49:23

So instead of looking like an idiot and fumbling their way through stuff they don't know about and learning and becoming educated and becoming less ignorant. They just use their ignorance and get the hell out of it.

Anthony Bryan 49:39

Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 49:43

But it's not Do you take it badly? Do you sort of see it as a real I?

Overcoming Pediatric Stroke disabilities and inspiring others



Anthony Bryan 49:52

I did as a teenager and in my 20s I did. Now. I've kind of started Learning. So you've stopped thinking of what? I'm not going to stop thinking of what I am. I've achieved this I've achieved that. I am, I am actually. Personally was fatigued quite a lot. Think about things that I have done. Don't think of yourself things you

haven't done. So value yourself and stop thinking of yourself negatively is why I've probably only in the last three, or four years started learning to do.

Bill Gasiamis 50:31

Yeah. Tell me about your speaking. What are you speaking about when you address people?

Anthony Bryan 50:41

So I went to see David Goggins who had been a role model of mine.

Bill Gasiamis 50:47

Stop. David Goggins forgot that guy. He'll run his legs into the ground, he'll run his legs into the pavement, just point.

Anthony Bryan 51:03

That's why I love him by him. But, yeah, I read his book in lockdown. One, there was one thing that stood out to me. And I was like, Wow, I've never fought myself on that before. So there's a chapter in his book called, be the only. And it's like, it kind of says, be the only in life to be successful. So if you're in a crowd of people, if you want to stand out and be successful, you need to be the only the only one that's the only one to stop.

Anthony Bryan 51:34

And he gave us a little story. When he was doing an ultra triathlon one day, he looked across the start line that all the others and he fought, yeah, these guys are fit. These guys are strong, they do their training. But none of these guys stand out, they all just kind of blend in. Then he looked to his left, and he saw one guy in his wheelchair jump out and was born chair, perch himself on the edge of the ledge ready to dive into the water.

Anthony Bryan 52:00

And he looked to me for there's that guy, he is the only one he's out here with all these ultra athletes. But he's the only one who stands out. He's the only one with that disability. And he's out here proving his point and doing that work. And I read that and I thought, That's me, every time I go and do a running race, so road running races of 5k, or 10k, I'm always the only one with disability.

Anthony Bryan 52:28

When I was at school, I was the only one with a disability and everything I did. I'm

always the only one with disability. But what I've been doing was I've been hiding away and trying to hide amongst the crowd. What I should be doing is being the only guy out there and standing out and owning it. And just doing the best I can do.

Anthony Bryan 52:51

And just being the best I can be. So I read that. And I thought, yeah, I like that. And then I started posting Instagram videos about myself lifting weights, doing my branding, doing all these kinds of great things. And people don't know how you do that. How do you lift, like a lift, just the other day, I lifted the 80-kilogram deadlift with one arm and everyone's gone. Whoa, you do that? To me, it's just kind of normal.

Anthony Bryan 53:19

But I'm showing what I can do with my disability. And people get inspired by that, because I always thought people would judge me and think or look at me funny. But people get inspired by me pushing myself with my disability. And that kind of spurred me on. And just before locked down. People used to ask me, So what's your story? What happened to you to tell them, they're like, that's incredible.

Anthony Bryan 53:50

You had a brain tumor and a stroke and told you never to walk again. And now you're a world champion. You need to tell people your story and stop hiding away. So during lockdown, I started a YouTube channel, and I started telling people about me and my story. And it started doing well. And I got invited on to a few talks over Zoom for like physios and doctors and things like that.

Anthony Bryan 54:16

And just from doing that, a woman said, Oh, my my son's school would love to come and hear you talk. So I went along to the school and did a talk I've never done a talk before, in front of 1000 kids. And I just told them my story. Because I have a picture of me as a six-year-old in a hospital bed with a bandage around my head.

Anthony Bryan 54:37

The kids could kind of relate to that. And they gave me this kind of big camera kind of response to my talk. At the beginning of the talk, the teachers were saying, oh, there's a few like kindergarten five-year-olds and they might switch off

and mess around but don't worry about that. We'll sort them out.

Anthony Bryan 54:56

And after doing an hour of my talk If the teacher said, I don't know how you did it, every single kid like that, you could hear a pin drop. She's even the fire rolls, which is sat there for the whole hour. She's like, I've never seen that. And that just made me. I don't know, that kind of made me feel good about myself, and, the fact that if I can inspire them, and maybe help them achieve something in their lives through my story, then this is a great feeling.

Anthony Bryan 55:29

So I then full, I'd love to do more of this. So I just started contacting schools and the schools of law and we'd love to have you in this year, I've done talk for over 8000 school kids. One of my favorite moments was when a girl wrote me a letter afterward. And she, she said, Thank you for your talk. today. I have cerebral palsy as well. And you inspired me, I would love to be like you. I was like, wow, that's cool. That's a great moment.

Fitness, injuries, and adaptive training for Anthony Bryan



Bill Gasiamis 56:03

It's a bloody awesome moment. That's That's it. That's what it's all about, isn't it? It's about in. It's about just being yourself with no agenda. And then other people going, Oh, I thought I couldn't lift weights with one. Cheers. He's doing it What

an idiot I've been. Let me try.

Anthony Bryan 56:25

Yeah, and then they can stop believing in themselves in achieving, I think, especially. It's, they have a lot of social media they're looking at now, they ever, they have to relate to things that are kind of way out of real realistic things now, especially kids, they've gone through the pandemic, which no kids come from before. So I struggle with more, they're going to say, mental health is going to be a big thing for those kids, pandemic kids in the future. So if I can give a bit of inspiration to them to go out and be the best you can fit your confidence incident, then ask great.

Bill Gasiamis 57:12

Who's making a note of that? I get congested, does my head

Bill Gasiamis 57:20

Oh, the 85-kilogram deadlift is difficult. For most people, I couldn't lift 85 kilos, I recently went back to the gym and every time and for two weeks in a row or two sessions in a row, I injured something. So session one, I injured my knee, doing a squat not a lot of weight. And then took two weeks off and went back to the gym. And then first day back I injured my shoulder.

Anthony Bryan 58:05

On your weaker side.

Bill Gasiamis 58:08

Yeah, on my weaker side, yeah, my knee I injured on my better side, my shoulder injured on my weaker side. And now those two things, bugging the hell out of me because I can't go to the gym and participate the way that I wanted to, which is just to do my full range of weights, for all my sets and all my. So I go anyway, and I mean, in and out in, you know, maybe 15, 20 minutes because I just do what I can.

Bill Gasiamis 58:39

And I've reduced all the weights back down to just the bare minimum just so that I can still be in the gym and still go to the gym and have a habit and lift weights and still go through all the motions but there's no way I can do squats at the moment. And there's no way I can do certain movements with my left arm. And it's frustrating. What's it like for you to have to protect your muscles in your body

what's it like to go through that and be and be able to kind of get back to training every single week I find that the imbalance is because of my left side.

Bill Gasiamis 59:27

The imbalance compared to more so is always making my bag tense always sort of stretching and moving my muscles weirdly. So massages and chiropractic and all that kind of stuff to loosen my left side is something that I spend a ton of money on. How do you prepare to do deadlifting Tell me about that whole process because it's got to be hard.

Anthony Bryan 59:57

I'd never lift that heavy ball and all the guys around me were lifting heavy. So I thought I'd go with it and see if I can do it. Ended up lifting in 85, never lifted 85 before my best would be 80. But the next day I was so stiff, like my lower back, because I was lifting one-sided. All this strain is going through one side, and I see it because I'm running three to four times a week as well.

Anthony Bryan 1:00:24

The muscles on my right side are so tight. I see a chiropractor every once a week and it's like 50 quid a session. So it does drain your money, but it needs to be done. Like, it makes a huge difference. If you're not seeing those chiropractors and physios getting a sports massage, you're gonna get injured and do more damage. So I do a lot of hard hard training, but I pay the money.

Anthony Bryan 1:00:51

So a lot of my money does go on chiropractors, like 50 quid, or more weeks sometimes. Yes. So I do a lot of that. But with your stories, you're saying that you struggle to do certain exercises. Because I work in a gym. I'm very good at adapting exercises. And there was this one guy in the gym. Not long ago, he came up to me and he goes, I had a stroke recently.

Anthony Bryan 1:01:18

And every time I sit on the leg extension, I just can't do it. It frustrated me and it gave me knee pain. So I said, I've got an idea. So what I do is I have ankle weights that I leave in the gym, and I have some lighter ones and some heavier ones. So I said, sit down on the bench, and I tied the ankle weights around his ankles. Now extend your leg up bring it down and bring it up.

Anthony Bryan 1:01:47

Bring it I said do that 20 To 30 Times now Can you feel your quads work? He's like, Oh, yeah, I can feel it working. Now. This is kind of adapting around ways of getting those muscles. So when you go to a gym, everyone's taught a set way to do things squat, you do it this way, deadlift, you do it this way. There are still ways to do those exercises, but getting the right muscles working in the body, not in a way that's hurting itself.

Anthony Bryan 1:02:20

So people in a wheelchair can do deadlifts, but what they'll do is sit on the bench, and the bar goes under the bench. And they just use their upper body to deadlift that's going to get their core on the lower back working. And that's how they would deadlift. Right. So I've just started doing adaptive CrossFit. And it's honestly it's, it's amazing because you have all these athletes go now and absolutely beast in these workouts.

Anthony Bryan 1:02:50

And you just think how on earth. I mean, there was one guy and so in one of the workouts we had shuttle runs going back and forth. And there's one guy who had one leg. So he was hopping to one end and then hopping back. And then he came back. He got to do deadlifts. And he's doing deadlifts on one leg, and then you pop it over there. And he popped in the back and it's like wicked. This is This is so cool. Yeah, there's always a way.

Adaptive yoga and marathon training

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:16

always a way and humans are so adaptable, we've been able to live in every part of the planet, cold, hot, dry, wet. It doesn't, you know, like humans are so adaptable with or without limbs. No matter what I mean, everything is possible. With a little bit of creativity and a little bit of guts and determination and a little bit of encouragement. That's kind of all we need and support.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:49

There's a whole bunch of people that I've spoken to and are doing adaptive types of yoga, and adapted Pilates and adaptive all sorts of things. It's so good that it's happening. Because like you said, you know, then anyone, you can rock up and participate and then just be able to experience that stuff. Most people can

experience regular gym sessions or Pilates or yoga, etc.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:20

Adaptive yoga seems to be kind of done on a chair, which you'd think is not, you know, it doesn't wouldn't have the benefits, but it does have the benefits just as if you were doing it on the floor. So I love that idea. So what's on the agenda? What do you get coming up? What's going to happen to you in the future? Sounds like there's plenty on.

Anthony Bryan 1:04:55

So I started thinking, what more am I capable of? I've done the 1500 I've done the 800. I've got golden. I then thought. So that year, my brother who doesn't do a lot of training, but he'd answered a charity 10k race. I thought surely if he can complete a 10k I can do I do a lot more training than him. So I thought, What the hell always it's 10k as well. So I ran the 10k.

Anthony Bryan 1:05:27

And I didn't know how to train for it. So I just thought, let's go just go do it and see what happens. And I got through about halfway 5k feeling okay, my legs started to ache a bit. But I feel like I got to 7k and my left leg, which is my weaker side, started dragging along the ground, and my right side is trying to pull me along. And I must admit, it's an absolute mess, awful.

Anthony Bryan 1:05:55

And my head said to me, what are you doing? Why are you doing this? Stop? This is crazy. Start walking. And I was about to stop and start walking. And this random lady runs past me. She goes, Oh, my God, we're doing amazing. Don't stop, don't stop, keep going. You inspire me. I've been watching you for the last few miles. And you've been helping me get through this. It going to keep going. And she kind of picked up my spirits. And I thought, yeah, you're right. It's only 3k to go.

Anthony Bryan 1:06:24

So I started pushing along and managed to get to the finish line in about 55 minutes. Wow, I never thought I'd be able to FBA capable of running 10k. It sounds like a million miles. But I completed it. And I went back to my coach. And I was like, I want to train more or look over fast. And I managed to not buy time, from 55 minutes down to 47 minutes.

Anthony Bryan 1:06:49

And I've just been doing these runs ever since. And I've been getting better at them. So then I thought, what's what's the next challenge? So next year, I'm running the London Marathon. And this is this is, again, just unknown territory for me. I've never gotten this far. I don't know if my weaker side can go that far. But I'm gonna give it everything I've got to try and get there.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:18

All 42 kilometers?

Anthony Bryan 1:07:21

That's it. Yeah. The furthest I've ever run so far is 10 miles and said the Americans double that and a bit more.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:30

Yeah. You've got a bit of training to do. So you've got heaps of time? Yeah.

Anthony Bryan 1:07:35

So it's next April. So I've got about five months.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:39

Okay, so you've got five months, I think you could get there. So what I love about this is that there are people that have already done this. I interviewed very early on in the process I interviewed. I'm just looking for it right now. Where is it? Where is it? A lady who lives in Melbourne, had a stroke when she was a kid as well, probably around your age. She has hemiplegia and then she has foot drop. I've got that.

Overcoming pediatric stroke challenges and achieving goals

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:17

And she decided I'd just search. There you go. And she decided that she was going to run a marathon. And then no, she decided to like you, she decided she was going to be five or 10 kilometers, something like that. And she got somebody to help her out. And then that trainer said to her, this is nothing, you know, we're going to run five trying to run five kilometers or 10 kilometers. Big deal here case, why don't you run a marathon? And he kind of continues to do it.

Anthony Bryan 1:08:57

Just go hard or go home.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:58

Yeah, and then she kind of just said, Well, all right. She's sort of signed up for his supposed marathon. Donna Campisi her name is running after a stroke episode. 28. Right. And she goes through that process of being convinced by this guy to run a marathon and she did it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:25

She ran it all she was completely exhausted and spent like most people who run a marathon and then she had to overcome some unique challenges that you know, that are related to foot drop and the way that all of that has to be managed. But she did make it she had a stroke at eight.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:52

Yeah, a similar story to you. And she was a machine and she was an absolute machine. She just didn't let anything get in her way. But she started her kind of athletic journey in her mid-40s. You know, she didn't get around to doing that type of stuff until she was beyond 40 years old. And it's just crazy. One of the first people who I met, who showed me what's possible after a stroke that's debilitating or, you know, causes disability or caused all these problems, and she grew up with all of the drama that you grew up with, which was.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:41

So she was born in the 70s. So she would have been even more dealing with all that you will never be able to do this stuff, and whatever. And then she has been able to work your way through that and get to the other side, it's cool that you're going to run the marathon, I'd love to talk to you, after you've run the marathon, right? So remember, after you've run the marathon get in touch, so we can have another episode so we can talk about how.

Anthony Bryan 1:11:11

I'm doing a vlog on my YouTube channel on it as well. So, all the weeks, or the weeks leading up to the marathon, I'm talking about how my training went, what went well, what went bad. So I've got a guide runner to run the marathon with me, and he's gonna like video alongside me as I run, and then we'll do a video after the video together, which would be cool. Awesome,

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:34

awesome. Well, there'll be links to all of that stuff in the show notes. So, anyone who wants to connect with anything can do that via the links that I'll share. As we wrap up. What's the hardest thing about stroke for you?

Anthony Bryan 1:11:54

It's the hardest thing, right? Stroke is, is change, flipping your whole life upside down, and you have to pick yourself up. And start again, you think this is the kind of my life is over, I'll never be able to do this. And I'll never be able to do that again.

Anthony Bryan 1:12:12

But like I said before, it's just the start of a new pathway in life. There's lots of help out there. You just have to look in the right places, you'll find communities, you'll find other people, groups that can help you live a full, great life. It's just sort of a new pathway. It's not the end of life. This is the new part. That's why it is a very hard journey. Because a struggle, it's going to be painful. It's going to be hard. But there is a way for it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:46

You might have already kind of sort of, in your answer answered some of the next questions, but I'm gonna ask them anyway, what's the you've had 27 years now, since your stroke? What does it teach you? I imagine the lessons have been many, and they keep coming.

Anthony Bryan 1:13:08

And it's told me that not just me, but all humans so capable of achieving such great things that we could never even realize. But we all sit in our comfort zones. And we are our own worst enemy. Sometimes we think we can't do this. And we can't do that we look at others and go, I can't do that. Well, we don't know. Because unless we try. So what I've learned is to give everything a try. I didn't think I'd be able to do weightlifting. I just gave it a try and turns out pretty strong.

Anthony Bryan 1:13:46

I didn't think I could do running, but I gave it a go, and it turned out to be a bit of work. I'm pretty good. I'm very good at pushing myself. I think the one thing I'm good at is just never giving up. Resilience is the main thing. I just don't want to be

like, be embarrassed, be that person who's embarrassed or myself again, I want to go there and achieve things.

Anthony Bryan 1:14:15

So I think one of the biggest things I learned is we are also capable of achieving so much and we don't even realize one of my biggest fears is kind of getting to an old age let's say I live to 100 I don't be there look back on my life and be in thought I could have been something once upon a time but I just never gave it a go. Or as you hear a lot of people say in life. I couldn't be someone once but I didn't do it. And I don't want to I don't want to be that person. Oh well. I'm older and live with regret.

Pediatric Stroke recovery with a survivor and researcher

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:53

Yeah, fair enough. And What's good about interviewing you, amongst many other things is that you're such a long way away from your stroke like it's been ages. So with that in mind, what do you want to tell others? who are just starting their stroke recovery journey? Because they reckon it's probably feeling like, it's hard. It's shit. It's terrible. life's gonna suck from now on and they've got all this stuff.

Anthony Bryan 1:15:29

Yeah, you feel like your life's over. So doom and gloom right now. But it's a, it's a slow process, but you just have to keep going. Keep on going. And, believe me. When you keep trying and keep trying, keep trying to use that weak hand because you might not be able to use it now about what, what one day and get a little flicker like that. And when you get a flicker, it's going to feel like the absolute best thing in the world that needs to keep going. And these good things will happen you might get.

Anthony Bryan 1:16:07

So the brain is always developing. So you just have to get into Pathways and go in. So get that movement going. So don't give up. Just keep trying. Keep trying. And these brain pathways will get stronger and stronger over time. Small little movements will come back just don't give up on yourself that's the main thing.

Anthony Bryan 1:16:28

Set a goal for yourself. You want to in a year or two years walk 100 meters or something like that. Then you've got a goal and the mind is an incredible thing. If you set that goal, a lot of the time you will hit it. You just have to be committed and determined to do it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:54

Awesome. Anthony, I appreciate you joining me on the podcast and sharing your story. I wish you well in all of the upcoming things that you want to do and achieve and I love to hear how the marathon went.

Anthony Bryan 1:17:13

Thank you for having me. Yeah, it's gonna be a challenge it's going to be a tough one. The biggest one I've done, but let's see how it goes.

Bill 1:17:21

Thank you to everyone who has already left the review on iTunes and Spotify, it is making a huge difference to the show's popularity and how easily other stroke survivors will be able to find the show. If you haven't left a review and would like to the best way to do that is just to go to Spotify and iTunes and leave a five-star review and a few words about what the show means to you.

Bill 1:17:43

If you are a stroke survivor with a story to share about your experience, come and join me on the show that interviews are not scripted, you do not have to plan for them. All you need to do to qualify is be a stroke survivor who wants to share your story in the hope that it will help somebody else who's going through something similar.

Bill 1:18:00

If you are a researcher who wants to share the findings of a recent study or you are looking to recruit people into studies, you may also wish to reach out and be a guest on my show. If you have a commercial product that you would like to promote that is related to supporting stroke survivors to recover. There is also a path for you to join me on a sponsored episode of the show.

Bill 1:18:20

Just go to recoveryafterstroke.com/contact Fill out the form, explaining which category you belong to and I will respond with more details about how we can

connect via Zoom. To learn more about my guests, including links to their social media and other pages, and to download a full transcript of the entire interview please go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes.

Bill 1:18:42

If you're watching on YouTube, please comment below the video. I love seeing people's comments I respond to all the comments and liked this episode and to get notifications of future episodes subscribe to the show on the platform of your choice. Thanks again for being here and listening. I appreciate you see you on the next episode.

Intro 1:19:02

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 podcasts are the individual's own experience and we do not necessarily share the same opinion nor do we recommend any treatment protocol discussed.

Intro 1:19:19

All content on this website at any linked blog, podcast, or video material controlled by 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 1:19:36

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Intro 1:19:57

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emergency number immediately for emergency assistance or go to the nearest hospital emergency department.

Intro 1:20:21

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