

Pete Rumpel: From Stroke Survivor to Inspiration

Be inspired by Pete Rumpel's holistic recovery journey after a massive stroke. Discover his approach to healing and resilience today!

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Transcript:

Pete Rumpel's Introduction and Initial Stroke Details



Bill Gasiamis 0:00

Hello everyone, and welcome to episode 330, of the Recovery After Stroke Podcast. Today, I'm thrilled to introduce Pete Rumpel, a hemorrhagic stroke survivor who embodies resilience and determination. Pete's recovery journey is nothing short of inspiring, as he shares how he overcame the physical, emotional and mental challenges of stroke, from adapting to life after a major stroke to embracing a holistic approach to recovery, Pete's story is filled with lessons on persistence, gratitude and personal growth.

Bill Gasiamis 0:35

Just before we dive into Pete's journey, I'd like to thank everyone who supports the podcast, if these episodes have brought you hope, insight or encouragement, consider supporting the show on Patreon, at patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke, your support allows me to continue sharing these powerful recovery stories with stroke survivors worldwide. Thank you to all the listeners and supporters, it means so much to me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05

Pete Rumpel, welcome to the podcast.

Pete Rumpel 1:08

Thank you, Bill. It's great to meet you.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10

It's great to have you here. Tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

Pete Rumpel 1:15

Well, on December 10 of 2022 I had a massive hemorrhagic stroke, and fortunately, my girlfriend at the time had been a nurse for many years, recognized it, called the people and the first responders who were awesome, and I was thank God I was staying at her place, because it was about 15 minutes away, and it was dramatic. So I've been recuperating. I've been about 21 months almost to the day, and, you know, I'm just tackling everything I can.

Bill Gasiamis 2:10

Yeah, dramatic. So what caused the bleed? I know there must have been a blood vessel that burst, but what was the underlying cause?

Pete Rumpel 2:20

I had everything, Bill. I recently been divorced, I was in a high-stress job dealing with private equity companies, and I had the kids living with me like it was a stress sandwich and I wasn't eating right, was definitely drinking too much, and it caught up with me a lot of what you talk about, and made a lot of changes that following day. So we move forward.

Bill Gasiamis 3:03

I call it the perfect storm.

Pete Rumpel 3:05

Yep, I've used your vernacular.

Bill Gasiamis 3:08

Yeah, and then it catches up with you, and then you end up in hospital on the day of the hemorrhage. What did you notice? How did it come about, like, what were the symptoms?

Pete Rumpel 3:23

I didn't really notice anything that day Bill, now that I look back when I've heard a lot of what you talked about, it's clear there were signals for a while when I look back at photos of myself, I'm like 'Oh God. Like, then all of a sudden, people come out of the woodwork, you know 'Hey, by the way, you weren't looking good. And very much similar to you, Bill, I wouldn't have listened. I was in my own universe, doing my own thing, and you know, got the humbling.

Pete Rumpel's Symptoms and Initial Reactions

Bill Gasiamis 4:06

Wow, divorce is hard for people always right? And then add that to a really high stress job and the normal parts of life, it's much, much harder. Had you been the kind of person who had the skills to deal with that much stuff all at once? Or are you just a normal guy who found yourself too far into the deep end and then you had no way out, and you had to use alcohol, for example? Or, you know, how did you find yourself in there?

Bill Gasiamis 4:42

Now, you know they say that the way to boil a frog is to turn up the temperature one degree at a time. The frog doesn't notice, and then all of a sudden it's floating like how did you get into that point of life?

Pete Rumpel 4:58

I think, you know, Bill. It's just like what a lot of the people that I've heard discuss it, it kind of, in a way, it sneaks up on you. There were a lot of things that led to it, but they don't happen in one day. You know, I had been a drinker, but functional, I had a lot of responsibility, and I always, tucked it in as part of my day, but now I started to eat out a lot, I had a lot of pressure. I was doing another thing I hear a lot from the people on your podcast, you know I was focused on me last, do everything else first, and you know that had to change.

Bill Gasiamis 6:12

Yeah, so you're the person who's the most important, but you're the one that's getting the least care.

Pete Rumpel 6:21

Yes, and I have very good friend of mine out in the west coast, Michael Geller. And he had said time and time again, you know, as much as I like to do different things, I have to take care of number one, or else the rest don't get taken care of, and I deviated from that, and so I was always surrounded by good people that I could learn from, but I got too far out on my out on my skis, if you will.

Bill Gasiamis 7:01

Who else was around in the family, was there in a family, an extended family? Who else other people that need love, care, support that you were kind of also responsible for at that time?

Hospital Experience and Initial Recovery

Pete Rumpel 7:16

Well, my kids, but they're wrapped up in their stuff. One of my daughters had gone off to college out in Hawaii, the other one was wrapping up high school, my sister was near me, and she is awesome, and she kept telling me 'Pete, you've gotta, you gotta do better, you gotta go the doctor. You've gotta do things. I was like 'I'll get there. I'll get there. And, you know, when I went, I went with the bang.

Bill Gasiamis 7:55

So how did you get to hospital? Did somebody, did you get picked up by an ambulance. What was that event like? What actually happened on the day of the

incident?

Pete Rumpel 8:07

Yeah Bill, it was a ambulance and my girlfriend at the time, called them to come. I was getting up early as about 4 in the morning, I was going to head home, and they came instead. And I was really lucky that I was at her place, and I was really lucky the hospital was right down the road, and she made the call for me. So it's basically saved my life.

Bill Gasiamis 8:39

How long did you spend in the hospital?

Pete Rumpel 8:44

A month.

Bill Gasiamis 8:47

What were the deficits you were dealing with?

Pete Rumpel 8:49

It was the right side. So I didn't have any movement in my arm, totally flaccid. Now I can do stuff fortunately, I couldn't walk. I was in a wheelchair for almost six months, and that's getting better, although it's not pretty, and I'm endeavoring to be a community ambulator, but not there yet, but I'm working on it, and I can walk without a cane and and do stuff. I've even did about 15 yards of a run just to see what it looked like, and it was a little scary, but you know, again, I continue to push.

Bill Gasiamis 9:46

We'll take a quick break here, and we'll be back shortly with more of Pete's journey. While you're here, I want to remind you about my book *The Unexpected Way That A Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened*. It's not just my personal story, it's a guide to post-traumatic growth after stroke, featuring insights and stories from stroke survivors like Pete, who found ways to rebuild and thrive, whether you're navigating your own recovery or supporting a loved one who is this book offers hope, practical steps and a roadmap to resilience.

Bill Gasiamis 10:19

You can find it on Amazon by searching for my name, Bill Gasiamis, or head to recoveryafterstroke.com/book, to learn more. Yeah, What's an ambulator?

Pete Rumpel 10:33

It's basically like being able to be a walking citizen. They actually time it Bill, so when you're an ambulator, it basically means you're walking, and a community ambulator is like being able to walk with traffic lights and stuff, so you can walk efficiently and fast enough to basically mix in the population Bill, and I'm trying to do that so I don't run the risk of another accident of a different type.

Bill Gasiamis 11:07

I love that somebody made up a formal word like that just for the sake of saying, walking around in your community.

Pete Rumpel 11:18

Absolutely, and there's a rhyme and reason for all this, right?

Bill Gasiamis 11:21

No doubt.

Pete Rumpel 11:22

It's just amazing how you have to dig through so much stuff to find the nuggets that that really, really help. And that's why, again, not to be, you know, too overwhelming here, but so much of what you serve up is so helpful, and it's been a big part of the recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 11:52

It's always strange to me when somebody says, this is the added, this is the episode that resonated with me. I often don't know which ones are going to resonate with who, but they do. I get some weird responses or comments like that about that podcast, and it's all good from that perspective, but I just don't, even sometimes I'm interviewing people, a lot of the things don't resonate with me because I'm a different version of stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 12:24

I live in a different part of the planet, I have a different background. So can I just let people tell the story and then let everyone else find what resonates and then hopefully it helps, right?

Pete Rumpel 12:36

Amen. It's huge because Bill, there's so many of them that was first listening to them. I'm like, I've never listened to that. Two months later, I'm like, I need that.

So it's really tremendous in the way you break it down, have their transcripts so I can read some before I get there. It's phenomenal.

Holistic Recovery and Emotional Impact on Pete Rumpel

Bill Gasiamis 13:00

Right? Awesome. Well, so you're a very upbeat kind of guy. What's it like to be your personality, to have your personality, you're very, you know, happy to engage with people, talk, all that kind of stuff, and then to be sort of struck down with this thing that makes you sit on your butt for the next six months in a wheelchair, but also that month in hospital, what's it like transitioning from who you normally are to who you became?

Pete Rumpel 13:39

Yeah, Bill, I would say, It's great question. I would say it took me, just till probably 16 months, to smile and to laugh at all. I was in a very dark place. I always tried to treat everyone well, be empathetic, but really focusing on holistic healing. And it started to resolve. I was so focused on the physical for so long, which I think is natural, at least it was for me, but listening to so much of like you talking about how it changed your life and stroke, being, you know, in a way, a blessing. Man, it takes me, I know you said it too, but it takes me a long time to get stuff in here.

Pete Rumpel 15:00

And wow, what a difference it's made, and I find now that and again, knock on wood, but I find now that acceleration of recovery seems like it's happening because you have to have gratitude. You have to think about the whole picture, being thankful, and all those things. And whatever people's spiritual go to is, and I look at and listen to all of them, it's awesome and it's really, it's coming.

Bill Gasiamis 15:50

Holistic is a word that has different meanings for different people, but to make it simple for everybody to understand, in my opinion, what a holistic recovery includes is the physical, the emotional and the mental. So, you know, for somebody, holistic recovery might include physical therapy, emotional counseling, and it might mean that there is some mental recovery, mental health recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 16:23

So by mental health, what I mean is you get an opportunity to talk to people about the way you think about things, and you get to question how you think about things. So it's about really going into your thought process and wondering, is my thought process supporting my recovery, or is it getting in the way? That's the main side of it.

Pete Rumpel 16:47

Amen, and I'm so thankful that you've focused so much on that across different podcasts, because that was a big missing link for me once I started understanding that and starting to and, you know, the holistic Bill, I would even, in a way, add spiritual into those three as well.

Bill Gasiamis 17:13

Indeed.

Pete Rumpel 17:13

Because again, it's just been really therapeutic, really positive.

Bill Gasiamis 17:25

In my emotional recovery is where spiritual recovery lies. So it's just part of that umbrella.

Pete Rumpel 17:30

Right on.

Bill Gasiamis 17:32

Emotional is part of your heart, right? Mental is your head and your thoughts, physical is your body. So when I talk about emotional, that definitely has that sub category of spiritual there. That's where spiritual lies, because once you access your version of spiritual recovery come into terms with your perhaps your Creator having let you down, or the universe having let you down, or whatever it is that you go to for some some guidance in those really tough times.

Bill Gasiamis 18:06

Then that enhances recovery, and it enables your head to grapple with what it needs to grapple with. Do you know what I mean? Because they get in the way, each one of them, if you don't handle the emotional and or the mental they get in the way of recovery, both of those interact with each other, so once your thoughts about recovery change and start to support you, the emotional improves, once

your emotional health improves and your spiritual side takes a right, you know, takes a good, sort of positive path, then your mental health improves.

Bill Gasiamis 18:50

So they're not separate, they're interlinked, that's for them. What they both do is they both improve the physical recovery, because if you're going to the gym three days a week and rehabilitating your leg, but all your thoughts are it's never going to get better, and your emotional health is really tough, really struggling. Well, then what's the point of going to the the gym and doing physical exercise for days every week? There's no point, kind of almost, isn't it's counterintuitive, like it's not counterintuitive, it's counterproductive.

Pete Rumpel 19:25

Yep, yep. I totally agree, and I totally see how you're looking at it. Hey, by the way, Bill, is this better on or off?

Bill Gasiamis 19:34

On.

Pete Rumpel 19:36

Okay, there you go.

Bill Gasiamis 19:37

Yeah. Does that light bother you?

Pete Rumpel 19:40

No, no, it's fine.

Lifestyle Changes and Physical Recovery

Bill Gasiamis 19:42

Cool. What else did you have to deal with when you got out of hospital? So one day you're working on your separation, your divorce, all the complications of that, you're at work, working like a very. A committed man to your job, and then everything stops, and then, how does that? How do you grapple with all of the things that stopped while you're in hospital for a month and then need to be in a wheelchair for six.

Pete Rumpel 20:19

I started doing it one day that time Bill and I was horrible at it, you know, I really was, I was horrible at it. And I just, I was very fortunate, Bill, because if I having my kids was really important, because I was like, am I going to lead by example, or am I going to be foolish, you know what? Crap, and so I said 'Hey, look, it's time to figure this out.

Pete Rumpel 21:05

I had been much heavier unhealthy Bill when I was in the hospital, I made a conscious decision to eat enough to survive, and that was it. So in my 30 days, I lost 40 pounds, and have continued to lose since then, I'm kind of set now, but I was over 300 pounds and I'm now 187.

Bill Gasiamis 21:38

Right? What a difference. So you made that decision in hospital.

Pete Rumpel 21:46

Yeah, because I'm like, if I don't start now, it's not going to happen, and Bill, listen, I don't want to come across the wrong way, like I'm definitely a type A personality, but I've learned a lot, and I was really up, pardon me saying this, but shits creek, it was really ugly, it was not like, I don't know how to describe it, but it was, it was tough learn minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, then week by week. It was not pretty at all, and I'm now, as we talk, you're hearing a little more of me, but that took 16 to 18 months to get back so and I, a lot of people will thank for.

Bill Gasiamis 22:52

You were 58 when the blood vessel burst up until then, how your health been? Had you spent any time in hospital for anything serious up to that time?

Pete Rumpel 23:04

No, but it was clear, I was getting further away. I used to be an athlete and do things more reg more regularly, but I started having, you know, I just got away from it, and it was a mistake, and one I will not make again, and thank God I have a second chance.

Bill Gasiamis 23:38

Did you have thoughts of mortality 'I might not be here tomorrow, next week, whatever.

Pete Rumpel 23:45

Yeah, a lot of that, especially Bill in year one, because when you read the stats like as you have definitely hemorrhagic stroke, you know, you lose a lot of people, 25% within the day, almost 50% within a month, and then over 70%, well, 74.3% in the first year.

Pete Rumpel 24:16

Not that I pay attention to the stats, but, that you've seen them also, and they continue to change and but needless to say, I'm like 'What's the other shoe that could drop? Which is why I went so hardcore on changing things I you know, as I said, I used to really enjoy my drink, I haven't had anything to drink in almost two years now.

Bill Gasiamis 24:53

Yeah, that's a good move for anybody, even if somebody wasn't a big drinker. I mean alcohol and brain health and brain recovery do not go hand in hand.

Pete Rumpel 25:04

Amen, and by the way, again, kudos to you and a number of people that put that out there, and all the focus on Neuroplasticity, it's phenomenal. And you know, you can get, you can get this thing to work for you if you do the right thing. So I'm trying.

Bill Gasiamis 25:26

Yeah, you gotta create the right environment for it. And if the brain wants to heal and you're still smoking or you're still drinking, or you're eating a high carb diet that includes, you know, heaps of wheat, cereals, sugars and all that kind of stuff, you're not creating the right environment for healing. So you're going to take longer to heal your brain. It's going to take longer for Neuroplasticity to happen, it's going to take longer for you to overcome the challenges that are ahead of you. So I didn't want to be that guy.

Bill Gasiamis 25:59

I made the same decision, you know, within maybe six weeks of being at home, that I couldn't be the guy who gets in the way of my recovery, because I would really hate myself if I did that, and I wanted to be supporting my recovery, and that's I made the decisions about food and all that kind of stuff very early on as well. Religiously, I avoided anything that was on the do not eat list. And it didn't

matter where I was, who I was with, it would make for some awkward conversations every once in a while, but then, you know, that was okay.

Bill Gasiamis 26:40

I took it as an opportunity to just educate people on my journey, like what I was going through, and not make it about them. It didn't have to be their journey, it was just my journey, that's what I have to do to be better. I've had a serious, serious scare. I've had two brain hemorrhages within six weeks, and I'm not going to I'm not looking forward to the next one, and I'm hoping it's never going to come, but it still came, and then I had brain surgery, but see, even now, I still, people still struggle with the fact and it's 12 years since my first bleed.

Bill Gasiamis 27:18

People still struggle with the fact that we'll go out to dinner and I won't have alcohol, and when they say 'What are you drinking? It's the same every time, it's soda water. They just don't, they just can't wrap their heads around it. And I'm not saying don't drink your beverage because of me. I don't do any of that, so I just drink soda water. Guys, just put a wedge of lemon in it, if it makes you feel better, if it makes it look like I'm holding an alcoholic drink.

Pete Rumpel 27:53

But that's right on Bill, I have people, most of my people are really people that I've been around, really supportive. They don't say anything, and the reality Bill is, I drank them up for three lifetimes, so I really don't need it anymore, it's not that it was ever ugly or anything like that, but, you know, I had my fair share. I've checked that box.

Bill Gasiamis 28:20

You reached a quota.

Pete Rumpel 28:23

Right on, man.

Bill Gasiamis 28:26

So what's like? What's life like now a couple of years down the track, what are you still dealing with? What are you still trying to overcome? And how has life changed?

Pete Rumpel 28:43

Well now, you know, I'm sorry, my, I should have turned that off. Sorry about that Bill.

Bill Gasiamis 28:56

That's all right.

Pete Rumpel 29:03

I'm living with my sister, which has been wonderful, and get ready to move out onto my own, and focusing a lot Bill on building stamina. So, as you know, and I've heard you talk about, you know, when I was first, when I was first recovering, Music Television, everything was like 'Whoa. And I'm just trying to get back to game speed and I do as many errands as I can, I remember you talking about, no matter what you were doing in a day, you were making sure you were delivering dinner and go get the groceries and do.

Pete Rumpel 30:00

That stuff stuck, I started out doing one thing a day, and now I go out and I'll do a bunch of errands, I've tried to work a couple times, but I haven't been able to yet, but I'm getting close, and I one thing I've also found, Bill, is every time I get a chance, an opportunity to push myself, I do it that that's not the way I used to be, and I'm so thankful, because there's so much I end up finding out I would not have known otherwise.

Bill Gasiamis 30:52

It's feedback.

Pete Rumpel 30:55

Right? And sometimes the feedback is alright, I'm not ready, other times like I couldn't drive until February of this year. I tried to, but I was like 'This is dangerous. So in February, I started driving. I was obviously, as many people know, it's really scary when you first get back to it, and then in April, so three months later, I did a seven hour trip down to the coast and back seven hours, so 14 hours total. And then in July, I went and visited my daughter in Texas.

Pete Rumpel 31:52

That was a 17 hour each way drive, but again, if I don't try, I don't know, and I just now I kind of appreciate 'Okay, let me give it a chance. And if it doesn't work, I can always cut back, get a hotel, what have you.

Bill Gasiamis 32:22

And go again when you've recharged.

Pete Rumpel 32:25

Right on.

Bill Gasiamis 32:27

Yeah, that's the thing about pushing, sometimes you pay the price because you get to the other side of pushing and you go 'Oh my god, I went too far, I am wrecked, I cannot function properly anymore. And then you use that time to just recuperate, and then sometimes you push and it's like 'Oh my god, like, look how far I've come, I've gone further than I thought, I've managed to do more than I thought, I'm less fatigued than I expected, I've recovered quicker. And it is a test that you have to put yourself through every so often.

Bill Gasiamis 33:03

Now, with driving, it's a little bit different, because I wouldn't want people to test the distance they can go and get fatigued and find themselves in a really difficult situation driving, right? I wouldn't want that, but anything else, almost anything else, walking, physical exercise, some kind of exertion, trying to work, anything that, that you know requires you to use head, eyes, ears, all at the same time, you know those multi faceted kind of movements or or physical things, then I think it's worth going for it.

Bill Gasiamis 33:54

And you can do that letting people know that you're going to go down a path of testing the boundaries and see where the boundaries are again, so that if you struggle to get there, you can have them sort of help you out of the mess that you found yourself in. And also, if you're going to have a big recovery day the following day, they know that you've planned for, and it's not going to it's going to be less dramatic, because what you're saying is I'm going to go do this push, and then I've planned for recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 34:30

I used to have a day of recovery available to me every time I went to the gym. So if I went to the gym in the morning, at the beginning, I'll be, I would be wiped out for the rest of the day.

Pete Rumpel 34:45

Yep.

Bill Gasiamis 34:46

And I knew that, say, Saturday was my day. I knew that if I went as early as possible, that wipe out ended, say, before the evening on my I recharged my batteries before the evening. So if we had to go to dinner or something, I'd be okay to get them, there was nothing else booked for my entire day. Now, if I went midday or 1pm I would probably be wiped out for the entire day. So a little bit of planning and paying attention to my patterns and understanding how my recovery was coming along.

Bill Gasiamis 35:22

Really allowed me to go to the gym and not feel bad about that not being able to participate in the rest of the day, and then clearly the gym's helping. So the more I went to the gym, the less my recovery took decreased, because I'm never big weights kind of guy, I don't do weights. I just push weight, just to act, to activate muscles, and to, you know, release endorphins and to build a little bit of strength, that's all I'm going for. I'm not doing any of the stuff I used to do as a 21 year old.

Pete Rumpel 35:59

Absolutely, and I gone through the same process. And by the way, Bill, I definitely don't I truncated a lot of the driving story, I did a lot of work driving. My sister took me to start driving again, and God bless her, because she must have been petrified, and it was, I did a lot of test and learn to get there.

Bill Gasiamis 36:27

Yeah. So it wasn't day 117, hours.

Pete Rumpel 36:30

No, no way.

Bill Gasiamis 36:33

Yeah, now you must enjoy driving. Were you one of those people who can drive across the country and lap it up?

Pete Rumpel 36:45

Yep, I usually drove people like, I don't want to drive, I'll drive.

Bill Gasiamis 36:52

Yeah, 17 hours. So what's the is that the biggest trip you've made.

Pete Rumpel 37:00

Yes since the stroke, yes, yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 37:04

I mean, how many miles is that?

Pete Rumpel 37:08

It's probably, I think, almost 1000.

Bill Gasiamis 37:17

Yeah, that's far.

Pete Rumpel 37:19

Yep, yeah, it was far, it was a big test, and I did get a hotel on the way home. So I did all the way there. On the way there, stayed four days, and then did a hotel on the way back. My sister was like 'You gotta get a hotel, you gotta, you're gonna need a rest. Sure enough, I got there on fumes, I was ready.

Bill Gasiamis 37:48

Yeah, I remember driving four hours to see a friend of mine probably about three months after my brain surgery, and when I got to his house, I was completely wiped out, it was probably longer that I should it was too long that drive for me. It was too long at the time, but I got there okay and safely, but I was so wiped out when I arrived, it took a lot out of me, I didn't realize the movement, the focusing, the concentration, all that stuff, how much of an impact that was going to play in my head, I never lost my license, even though I couldn't walk, feel my left side, all that kind of stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 38:35

For one period of time, I never lost my license. So I was driving pretty much immediately after I got home after brain surgery, which was maybe six weeks after brain surgery, and then the trips were close, you know, they were to the store, that kind of trip. But my left side was really weird, and I have an automatic car, so it helped, if it was a stick shift, I wouldn't have been able to change the gears or feel the clutch with my left leg, so my left hand would off, would often kind of lose grip. I was holding the stimulus quite well with my right hand.

Bill Gasiamis 39:19

My left hand was doing its job to an extent, but then it would kind of lose grip and let go, and I needed to adjust the way I was handling the steering wheel. So because I thought that I had done enough driving around my suburb and went to the shops a number of times, I thought that it was a good idea to do four hours, and it probably wasn't at the time, because then I had to spend a couple of days at my friend's place and then drive back for another four hours, and I was worried about those that trip back, although I was up for it, and I managed it quite well in my mind.

Bill Gasiamis 40:00

I was a little bit uneasy about the fact that I'm going to have to do such another big trip again. Basically, what I'm trying to demonstrate is everyone's different, and the things that you have to take into consideration are different for everybody, but that was my version of of it. So people considering going back to driving like, like you did get some family members to sit next to you for a little while and freak them out.

Pete Rumpel 40:28

Yeah, I freaked out my daughters too, I would did a little part of a road trip before I was driving to get ready. But yeah, I really leaned on a lot of the people around me, and I was shuttled for a long time before being, you know, it took me 14 months before I was ready to really go after it, because I tried about eight months in, and I was like 'No way, I'm gonna hurt me and somebody else.

Pete Rumpel's Support System and Community

Bill Gasiamis 41:03

Yeah, what was behind the decision to move back into your sister's place for a little bit.

Pete Rumpel 41:13

Just to have support? I wasn't ready to do stuff on my own, I was, especially when I got heroes too weak, and my right hand wasn't usable at all, my right leg was a mess, and I needed healing. And just as you said, Bill, yesterday, I felt really unusually tired, I took that time chilled, said no to a few things I was supposed to do, got up and went and hit his hard today.

Pete Rumpel 42:03

So, we all like start to understand the rhythm, and that's why I don't want to come across as, like 'Whoo. You know, got it beat, no way, there's a lot of learning left, and I'm just trying to, you know, push as hard as I can.

Bill Gasiamis 42:28

I love what you said there about the rhythm, that's exactly what I experience is I understand the rhythm, I know what's coming, and I know what I need to do to overcome it, and everyone gets schooled around me today, I'm saying no to everything 'You guys do whatever you want. Yeah, my blessing, I'm going to do what I want.

Pete Rumpel 42:28

Love it.

Bill Gasiamis 42:28

Which is nothing, I'm going to sit down on my butt, maybe read, maybe watch TV, maybe listen to some music, and I'm going to do nothing, and I remember going over overseas early on, probably about three or four years after my surgery.

Bill Gasiamis 43:09

And I had told, you know, traveling, air, flights, all that kind of stuff, from Australia to go anywhere is such a hassle. It's such a long trip. So I remember being out and about and feeling really exhausted, and then saying to my wife 'You're doing the city on your own tomorrow, you go and do your thing, and I'm just going to chill out and relax.

Bill Gasiamis 43:31

And she made plans to be out and about and discover things on her own, and that evening, I went to bed really wrecked, but I woke up feeling ready to go, and I said to her 'Right, what are we doing? What are we gonna go see today? She said 'I thought you were, you're, you're wiped out, you're not doing anything. I said 'Yeah, that's changed, I feel great, we're going.

Pete Rumpel 43:59

That's great.

Bill Gasiamis 44:01

You know, so unexpectedly you turn these corners and you're able to participate

in things that you would have been happy to sort of check out of a little earlier.

Bill Gasiamis 44:17

So I hope we're painting the picture for people that ebbs and flows. Things are never really that predictable, and you just gotta be flexible and adaptable and just go with the flow.

Pete Rumpel 44:33

Yeah, and that, you know, Bill and I again, that's not easy for a number of us, right? We're used to pushing, pushing, pushing, but I've learned some grace, and I'll continue to learn and try and get stronger as I go.

Bill Gasiamis 44:55

Yeah, where are you at with work and going? Are you thinking of going back? Is that on your radar?

Pete Rumpel 45:04

Yeah, I think somewhere in the next maybe six months or so, I've got to see but I definitely want to go back, and I want to go back in close to the capacity I was in.

Bill Gasiamis 45:30

What does that look like? What kind of work were you doing?

Pete Rumpel 45:35

I was Chief Revenue Officer and in a couple roles, CEO.

Bill Gasiamis 45:42

Right? Big roles.

Pete Rumpel 45:47

So yes, but yeah, and they were big and a lot of responsibility. I'll probably do a different size, different type, org, but I'm gonna go for it, and by the way, when I first go back Bill, I'm gonna do whatever I can do to add value.

Bill Gasiamis 46:09

Yes.

Pete Rumpel 46:09

And then I'll figure out where I migrate to and what I can do, and maybe get the kind of place where I can prove myself and move up as I go. But it's not an ego

thing, I've gotta get out, prove myself all over again, and then build the track record, if you will.

Bill Gasiamis 46:36

Yeah, well, you could always be a CEO of a not for profit or something.

Pete Rumpel 46:46

Maybe, that, again, I have so much to learn, Bill, and I'm going to put that cap on at the right time, but right now, very focused on recovery, and you know, even having this dialog as you know it, that kind of I couldn't have done this four months ago, would have been really hard.

Bill Gasiamis 47:13

Really, why?

Pete Rumpel 47:16

Just the stamina of a conversation and focusing and dialoguing, listening all that stuff. Well, I've never really been good at listening but, you know, it's I'm just every opportunity, I'm like 'Go for it.

Bill Gasiamis 47:40

Yeah. So you really seem to have, like, turned the corner. There's, clear indicators to you there that you know you've, like, really turned the corner, although there's obviously stuff you're still dealing with, etc, you've made a big leap in the last few months, by the sound of it.

Pete Rumpel 48:00

Yes, definitely, and it's been again, it's that acceleration principle Bill, like I remember reading something, I can't remember the gentleman's name, and he described that incrementally, the better he got, the More he could take on the faster heal, and that's right on like, I have a really good friend of mine named JP, he's down on the coast in Charleston. I just went down and visited him. He goes to the beach every morning, works out, runs, push ups, goes in the water, I did. I walked on the sand while he ran, I got in the water, and at the end of that week, my I felt better and I was stronger.

Pete Rumpel 48:55

And that was only like a week two weeks ago, and he got me in touch with a friend of his, it's a chiropractor and, Doctor J, and he did these miraculous things,

and then my foot that I was dragging on the floor wasn't dragging post, going and seeing him. So I think a lot of it is, I know I was looking for mere two cures at the beginning, and the reality is, it's the right thing at the right time, and things kind of come together and just continuing to try and push the pushing is the important part. And you know, like my buddy JP calls it the JP boot camp, and I was in it.

Pete Rumpel 49:58

I was in it for four days, and when, when he went to go to a golf tournament, I was like 'Relax. But it was all kidding aside, it was amazing. And, you know, there's, it's just go, go, go, and that's what I needed, that's what I needed at that time.

Bill Gasiamis 50:21

Nothing beats hard work and dedication to your cause, it beats a miracle cure anytime. It takes a bit longer, but it beats a miracle cure anytime.

Pete Rumpel 50:35

Yeah, and surrounded by his friends and some my friends down there, it was an amazing week. And again, Bill, it's something it could be easy to say, well, let's do it another time. Let me, come down when I'm better. But he had tremendous grace and let me be me, and pushed and always gave me the chance to opt out, and it was awesome. Things like that make all the difference.

Bill Gasiamis 51:13

They do see that's that's accessing and encouraging and supporting your emotional side. We think about hanging out with your best buddy and doing all this crazy stuff like that's really emotionally uplifting and positive, and you can see like, how much that emotional positivity and connection with other people and all that kind of stuff, how much it helped with your physical recovery.

Pete Rumpel 51:42

Amazing,

Bill Gasiamis 51:45

And your mindset.

Pete Rumpel 51:48

Absolutely and one of your podcasts, I'm forgetting her name right now, I think it was Maddie who talked about having a recovered mindset.

Bill Gasiamis 51:58

Yeah.

Pete Rumpel 51:59

You know, think about you being healed and play that way, and I took that to heart. Man, I was doing the opposite of that before that, and I'm like 'That's exactly right, especially with what we've learned about how the brain works.

Bill Gasiamis 52:22

I'm already recovered. Sure, I've got wounds that I've gotta dress, that I've gotta heal, that I've gotta nurture, but I'm already on the path to recovery. I'm thinking about how I'm going to be more recovered down the track, and focusing on that, rather than focusing on all the problems that stroke has caused, because, man, it causes a ton of them, and for everybody could be different versions of dramatic, you know, so like, you have to think about recovery as something that you are, like you're embodying recovery, and it doesn't look a certain way.

Bill Gasiamis 53:04

It's an attitude, it's a lifestyle, a recovery lifestyle. You really have to move towards that kind of version of life, and then everything you do is about recovery, you know, not drinking at the pub with your mates on a Saturday night, for me, is about recovery. It's still about recovery, 12 years on, I don't want to, I don't want to, I can't be out and not be thinking about my recovery while I'm out and letting it slip. Do you know what I mean? I can be doing both, because I'm out, I'm not drinking, that's part of recovery. I'm connecting with my friends, having a great emotional time.

Bill Gasiamis 53:45

That's part of my recovery. So you can mold them all together, you can bring them all together, and you can re like, redefine what going out is about. It's no longer, let's go out for a drink, it's about we go out, we connect, we have fun, we laugh, we say dumb stories, we talk about serious things, we experience a meal together, we break bread together, whatever, and then we bring it in. That's our, that's my therapy, that's my recovery. You know, you could turn it into your therapy.

Pete Rumpel 54:24

Right on, right on.

Bill Gasiamis 54:30

Were you ever any good at golf?

Pete Rumpel 54:35

No, is a you know, I just really enjoyed it.

Bill Gasiamis 54:38

Yeah, talking, walking, chatting with your mates.

Pete Rumpel 54:46

Yeah, and just being outside. That was one of the things my buddy JP brought up Bill was getting in the sand with your bare feet connecting, to the earth, and sure enough, it makes a big difference, and it puts a smile on the face as well.

Bill Gasiamis 55:09

Yeah and how was it walking on sand with your balance issues and your walking.

Pete Rumpel 55:18

Good point Bill balance was really, really tough, especially the first 18 months. Now I'm getting better at it, I hit there was a beach we went to that had a dune where I had to go up the dune, down the dune. And, yeah, there were some nervous people watching, and it was great. And by the way, the having you adjust for the sand was very healthy.

Pete Rumpel 55:54

Also for my brain, like you think through it, you gotta walk through it, you've gotta, you know, watch your momentum and how you position your body. And by the end of the week, I was really good at it, and it was another check box, you know, another wouldn't have known that.

Bill Gasiamis 56:16

And it's a pretty safe place to fall, because it doesn't ever really hurt when you fall on the sand.

Pete Rumpel 56:21

Amen, and the water's great, except going from the beach to, like, hip deep, there's a little challenge there, it's a little dicey, but then once I get in and I can squat down and, you know, have the sand, I'm all set, but that was great, too.

Bill Gasiamis 56:43

I still feel weird getting out of the beach and walking, you know, the transition between the wet sand and the dry sand, that's a real interesting kind of thing for my left leg, and the way that it kind of interacts with the pebbles and all the little sharp things that are in the sand, and often I'll lose my balance in that spot, either walking in or walking out, and I'll end up either falling on the sand or falling in the water.

Bill Gasiamis 57:19

But it's so but it's like the right place to fall and do it, try and adjust and do all those things. Because nothing, you know, nothing really goes wrong when you fall on sand or when you fall into one foot of water, it's still good.

Pete Rumpel 57:39

You're right a lot better than a lot of the other options, for sure.

Bill Gasiamis 57:44

Yeah, I found myself also in rehab, really lucky that they had a pool with us with in our facility. So when I was in there for a month, I asked 'Can I please use the pool, because the hard floor of the other surfaces and all that was important to learn to walk on. But I was a little bit concerned with falling and then in the water, in the water was totally safe.

Emotional Growth and Listening Skills of Pete Rumpel After The Stroke

Bill Gasiamis 58:21

So I was doing running up and down the water, or pretending to run up and down the water, and it just, I don't know, it just kind of changed the way that I viewed the physical part of it was less scary to do that in the first month after not being able to walk.

Pete Rumpel 58:41

Yeah, Bill for me, I was in I did therapy for a physical therapy almost for a year, about a year, and then I, you know, insurance, all that stuff. So I joined a gym here in the US called LA Fitness, and they had a pool. So now I do three aquatics courses a week, and it has made a tremendous difference the pool 'Oh god, it's amazing, the pool.

Bill Gasiamis 59:24

Yeah, good in the joints, it's good because it allows you to float a little bit. It's safe because you're not really going to fall and hurt yourself, there's so many things about it. It's good, hydrotherapy is awesome. Something worth considering for anyone who's listening and hasn't done it yet, see if you can find a good place to go and do some hydrotherapy.

Pete Rumpel 59:47

It's yeah, and by the way, Bill, there's a great article I read. It was, I forget who was, it was about a stroke victim survivor who went. It, 23 years without the movement of the arm or the hand, happened to go swimming and got movement, and now he's starting to unleash amazing I wish I had his name but a mate, 23 years Bill and the water got him going.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:26

Wow, that's so cool. Your homework is going to be to find that article and send it across so we can put it in the show notes, so people can ever.

Pete Rumpel 1:00:35

Will do.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:36

That's your homework. Tell me a little bit about what was the hardest thing about stroke for you.

Pete Rumpel 1:00:55

The not knowing the amount of I knew was so little Bill, I there are people, and I think, if your background might be entrepreneur, entrepreneurial, I think was.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:20

A little, yeah, little like that? Yeah, I started my own painting company 20 years ago.

Pete Rumpel 1:01:24

Okay, there you go. People that are like that, oftentimes they impress me like crazy because they just, they go, they they've got an idea, they go. That's less my MO. I'm a paint by numbers type person, and it for me, the little amount that I could read into and be predictive about where I could go was nuts. I mean, it was so like listening, learning again.

Pete Rumpel 1:02:16

This podcast, great example, I learned so much about what was possible, how I need to think, how I need to get over this, because of all the pains of the people went before me, I got to stand on their shoulders, and it's tremendous, but that was the scariest part for me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:44

Being ignorant and having the the idea in your head about what stroke looks like the majority of the population before they have a stroke.

Pete Rumpel 1:02:55

Amen.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:56

Thinks it looks like this, and it's always really terrible, and you only ever remember the really bad ones that you came across. You don't remember about the other stuff, so you're ignorant, like everybody before you that came and had a stroke and the many people after you, it's just nuts how ignorant we were. I was the same, and I'd never heard or met anybody that was that had had a stroke, and I just couldn't bring my head around, trying to.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:10

At 37 you mean, and then I'm interviewing people and they're going, I was 19, and then I'm interviewing mums whose child had a stroke, and I was like 'Oh, I didn't realize I was that dumb. But okay, I'm ready to learn. So, you know, educate me, and that was my journey as well. It was the same for many stroke survivors I've interviewed, it's that so completely oblivious to what's going on around you in your community? One in four people will have a stroke in their lifetime, I mean, it's not a few people that it's happened to, it's happened to millions of people.

Pete Rumpel 1:04:13

Yeah, and the amount of the amount of young people is really staggering as well, and you're absolutely right. I'm definitely a kinder, gentler Pete now.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:29

It's amazing how we all become nicer and better than we were before. That's wonderful.

Pete Rumpel 1:04:38

Right on, right on.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:44

So I know stroke has taught you heaps, but I'm going to ask you that again, what has stroke taught you? There might be a deeper answer there that you come up with, I don't know.

Pete Rumpel 1:04:59

I think that big thing, Bill is the thing that immediately pops in my head when you asked was listening and being present in the moment. And I know there are a lot of people that have written about it, and there's a lot of great stuff out there, but the amount I used to try to multitask and be on to the next thing while I was wrapping up a conversation with someone I don't do that now, like I want to be all in, I want to understand, I want to know the details, and then when, when I'm done, I'm done, and I want to be in the moment and fully available and on.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:07

Do you think that version of listening was just as a result of your employment and the kind of work that you've done that give me the short version, not the long version? You know, the business think, is very different than one on one emotional think and listening.

Pete Rumpel 1:06:29

You are absolutely right, but I think business think also is what you make of it, and I didn't do a good job because I've had people that have been tremendous role models that I really respect. They listen, they ask really intelligent questions, because they listened, and I didn't do that, and so I wouldn't blame it on the business, I would blame it on how I did business, and I needed to improve.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:12

So you see it as just your perception was ill formed, and you thought that it was still able, you are still able to continue in your role, provide a good outcome. And now you see this space for more listening, even at the that level of responsibility in an organization, it sounds like it's actually more important to listen than you ever imagined.

Pete Rumpel 1:07:45

It really is, Bill, you sit there, I will sit there, and I'd be like 'Okay, let me prepare

for the six scenarios that could happen here. But then, while I'm doing that, I'm not listening the same way I'll think I am. I want to be, you know, ego wise? Yeah, of course I'm listening, but if I'm really listening and really grooving with what is being told to me, I'm going to have a better answer and be much more prepared.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:26

So the ego is taken ahead as well.

Pete Rumpel 1:08:29

The ego's gone Bill like the ego is useless, ego hurts. It doesn't help.

Final Thoughts and Advice From Pete Rumpel

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:47

Wow. People are listening to this conversation, maybe they're listening for the first time, this is the first episode they've ever tuned into, or like you, they're a avid listener. What do you want to tell them?

Pete Rumpel 1:09:17

Feel emotional. Don't quit, keep pushing so important.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:37

Words to live by. On that note, thank you for being on the podcast.

Pete Rumpel 1:09:46

Thank you very much, Bill for everything you've done.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:50

Well, that wraps up another inspiring episode of the recovery after stroke podcast. Pete's story reminds us of the importance of persistence and gratitude and embracing a holistic recovery approach, his ability to adapt, push forward and remain hopeful is a testament to the strength of the human spirit. If this episode has helped or inspired you, please consider supporting the podcast at Patreon, via patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke, every contribution makes it possible to share more stories like Pete's and provide hope to stroke survivors and their families around the world.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:29

A big thank you to everyone who supports the show and has left a review on

iTunes and Spotify or on YouTube, these reviews are so important to help the show grow. If you haven't already, please consider leaving a five star rating. Like, comment, share and subscribe to stay updated on future episodes. If you're a stroke survivor, or you know someone who is and they have a story to share, I'd love to hear from you or them.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:00

My interviews are relaxed and unscripted, so just come as you are. If you have a product or service related to stroke recovery, consider sponsoring the show or an episode of the show by visiting [recovery after stroke.com/contact](https://recoveryafterstroke.com/contact) fill out the details, and I'll be in touch with you for how we can meet over Zoom, thank you for spending your time with me today. I look forward to seeing you in the next episode.

Intro 1:11:27

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Intro 1:11:57

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Intro 1:12:21

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Intro 1:12:48

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