Pons Stroke Recovery – Brisa Alfaro

Brisa Alfaro had a pons stroke that caused her to be completely locked in her body with no movement except for her eyes for at least 2 months before she got some movement in one of her pinkies.

Instagram
Website

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Transcription

Brisa Alfaro 0:00
I didn't think that I wasn't going to recover. I knew I was going to recover. Call it naive, call it, you know, stubborn, whatever you want to call it. But I mean, I was faced with facts, I was faced with less than 1% chance to recover, I was faced with the data that they had around the world, that there was less than five cases per year worldwide of the type of stroke that I had of people that have survived.

Brisa Alfaro 0:39
I mean, all roads lead to a certain outcome. But call it naive. Maybe I didn't want to believe that. I wanted to believe my story. I believed that I was in charge of my own story, and the way the direction that I wanted to go in.

Intro 1:04
This is the recovery after stroke podcast, with Bill Gasiamis, helping you navigate recovery after stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11
Hello, and welcome to another episode of the recovery after stroke podcast. Please comment, like and share this episode or your favorite episode or any other episode. Because that makes the algorithm on YouTube and Google push it out to more people who are looking for inspirational recovery stories about stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 1:38
And especially when they're just starting on their recovery journey, we all know how stroke can be really, really difficult, especially at the very early phase of recovery and diagnosis. And I started this podcast because I was missing that type of information when I was doing my own recovery, way back in 2012 and all the things started for me.

Bill Gasiamis 2:03
And I need this to get in front of as many stroke survivors as possible because that's the whole point of it. It's to share inspirational recovery stories. There are nearly 200 episodes now and my guests are all fabulous people overcoming tremendous challenges and difficulties and moving forward with their lives in spite of what the stroke has done to them or caused to them.

Bill Gasiamis 2:28
And if you think the show deserves that, also, I would love a five-star review, if you can, anywhere you listen to the show, whether it's on Spotify, or the Apple podcast app or Stitcher or the Google app, it doesn't matter where if you can leave a review, because the particular platform allows it, that'll be great. It'll help the show rank better. And it'll get in front of those really important people, the caregivers, and the survivors who really need that information. And hopefully, it'll make it easier for them to recover.

Introduction

Bill Gasiamis 3:02
So, thanks so much for doing that. This episode is 196 and my guest today is Brisa

Alfaro, 32, out of nowhere, with apparently no signs that there was a stroke about to happen experienced a Pons Stroke in her brainstem that caused her to become locked-in.

Bill Gasiamis 3:25
And that meant that she couldn't move any part of her body. She was like that for at least two months where there was nothing that was moving. And then at around the two-month mark, one of her little pinkies started to move. And that was the beginning of this amazing, miraculous recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 3:45
Brisa is now an author. She is a public speaker and she helps people in recovery. And this is just an amazing episode. I really became really inspired when I heard this. And that's it for me. It's on with the show. Brisa Alfaro. Welcome to the podcast.

Brisa Alfaro 4:06
Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 4:08
It's my pleasure. Thank you for being here. Tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

Brisa Alfaro Before The Stroke

Brisa Alfaro 4:13
Okay, so before I tell you what happened to me, you have to kind of know who I was before. So, as a lot of people, you know, I share this with a lot of people, they're go-getters, right? You have a goal and you go after it. And that's how I was, I was working every day on my craft.

Brisa Alfaro 4:36
I was constantly trying to better myself in my career. I was you know, any given moment that I had, I would just fill it with more and more and more. I was trying to climb the ladder. I was successful in my industry. My industry was the beauty industry.

Brisa Alfaro 4:58
So I was hair, makeup nails. I worked on celebrities, I lived in New York City, I

would work New York Fashion Week, my work was displayed in magazines, and I was able to share my work on stages. So I was living the life of my dreams. And I honestly never expected to come to a complete stop. And I don't think we ever do. We just go and go and go and, never really expect for bad things to happen when they do. And it's really never the right time.

Bill Gasiamis 5:41
One of the things that surprise me Brisa is I speak to obviously a lot of stroke survivors. And sometimes you get that one stroke survivor who says, why did it happen to me, and they kind of naively lived in this world where they expected that being alive for them specifically, it was going to be smooth the whole time.

Bill Gasiamis 6:06
And they were going to get to the end, it was going to be like a Hollywood movie ending or something. And it's such a hard thing to tell them. You're alive. That's why it happened to you no other reason that it wasn't God, you didn't do anything wrong. It's just what's meant to happen to us. Even though that's terrible to hear. And it's not nice. And there's no explanation sometimes for it, that's just how it is. That's part of life. And it's a terrible part of life, but it is part of life.

Brisa Alfaro 6:42
It is and I think when we stop living in the "why me?" mentality, is when our life starts to open up and change for us. But as long as we stay stuck in that, why me? That poor me? Why did it happen to me? I think we need to realize that honestly, these things can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere in the world.

Brisa Alfaro 7:05
And why not me? So now it's my job to take this and change it and evolve. And okay, so now, this happened to me. Now, what can I do from this point on? How can I learn and move forward? How can I grow?

Brisa Alfaro 7:31
It's when we stay stuck, it's when we constantly are stuck in the mentality of why me poor me that we stay there. And we don't grow from that. Because we're constantly thinking of, you know, the negative. And if we use that negative to grow from it, then that's when amazing, powerful things can happen to us. And that's what actually happened to me.

Bill Gasiamis 8:03

Yeah, the stroke, The why me person is the stroke victim. And then why not me is the stroke survivor.

Brisa Alfaro 8:13
Right? Yeah. You use that negative and turn it into a positive and you realize that it didn't happen to you? It happened for you. And you just have to figure out how did it happen for you? You'll find out?

Bill Gasiamis 8:30
Yeah, that's a tough question to contemplate for some people. But I've definitely done that. And the how did it happen for me was clearly for anyone who's listening to this podcast is clearly because this podcast had to happen.

Bill Gasiamis 8:46
I had no idea about podcasts, strokes, or anything of that nature. In 2012, when I became unwell, zero things in my mind about being on a podcast that goes globally that gets downloaded by people from all around the world where I get to meet them and talk to them and share their stories and inspire people and all that kind of stuff. No idea that was the how is this thing?

Brisa Alfaro 9:12
It happened for you? And now, you know, I think that we have to evolve to figure out why this happened. How did it happen for us? And as you said, I mean, what you're doing, sharing what you're sharing, sharing the stories that other people have lived through and accomplished and what they've done, and maybe they too, can help you in your journey.

Brisa Alfaro 9:20
I think that the way that it evolves, if you never had gone through what you went through, you wouldn't be here today. You wouldn't be sharing and helping us, you know, going through what we're going through. So I think that's how it happens for you. And that's how you have to look at it.

Bill Gasiamis 10:00
Yeah. I love that question that how? That's a great question. And really, one that I didn't ask immediately, clearly, a lot of us are not that resourced immediately to be able to ask the right question. And sometimes you have to ask the wrong question a few times.

Bill Gasiamis 10:21
That doesn't feel right, you don't get a good outcome. And then, you get to ask a better question, find a better question. And then keep asking until you get an aha moment, whether it comes from the universe or from God, or from within you from wherever it comes.

Bill Gasiamis 10:38
As long as you get that aha moment at some point, and it will come. So what's life like, for you living and working in the space and in the world that you worked in? You're I imagine coming into that, from very young in your life, you've trained for that you've aimed for that you've shot for that you've got that? What is daily life like? How intense is it how full-on is it?

Stop And Smell The Roses – Brisa Alfaro

Brisa Alfaro 11:18
Then it was pretty intense. Honestly, whatever moment that I had free, I would fill it with something because I felt like I had to be productive. And if I wasn't moving and going and filling my day up, then I wasn't productive. And as a result of that, you know, what happened to me, instead of, you know, when they say stop and smell the roses. I didn't have time for that.

Brisa Alfaro 11:51
Until life forced that upon me. And then I realized, like, oh, that's the thing. You do, stop and smell the roses, you do appreciate life. And if you don't do that, then life will do that for you. And that's kind of what I ran into. I didn't appreciate life to the gravity that I appreciate life now. But that happens to a lot of us, right? We have to kind of go through things to realize what we had.

Brisa Alfaro 12:31
And then all of a sudden, we appreciate it. So unfortunately, I had to realize what I had, through having a stroke at 32 years old, and living through surviving a less than 1% chance to recover. Surviving something that I never expected to go through at my age. It was something that I always thought that was for other people to experience like other people go through that kind of stuff, not me.

Brisa Alfaro 13:06
Why would I go through that? Like I felt like I was healthy. I didn't do drugs, I

didn't drink I was a good person. I was a good person. So bad things don't happen to good people. Right? I was blindsided. That, yes, it can happen. And I think that my recovery really started when I stopped focusing on like what we were talking about before, why me? Stop focusing on why me? Why me? Poor me? And I started thinking, Okay, what do I have to do next? What do I have to do next to grow and learn and evolve and recover? And that's when my recovery started.

Bill Gasiamis 13:53
At 32 had you ever met anybody before that was clearly disabled in a wheelchair clearly unwell from something severe, that you might not have been aware of what it was, but had you ever met somebody with that kind of a challenge?

Brisa Alfaro 14:13
Yes, my grandfather. He had a stroke. But my grandfather was also older. So he was much older. He was in his late 80s. You know, I never had been around anyone really that had survived a stroke. I've heard of people having them and even people in my family that have had them and then they had a stroke and they passed away. And then my grandfather he had a stroke.

Brisa Alfaro 15:00
And he survived through it. However, his way of life completely changed. And in my mind, that is something that happens older people, and not someone my age. So while I was living my life, I never expected something like that to happen to me at such a young age. I thought, maybe when I'm older in life, you know, both things happen.

Brisa Alfaro 15:28
But I really was never exposed to it much other than watching my grandfather recover, and his thing, the challenges and things that he was going through, not until I was going through it myself, did I honestly put myself in those shoes. I mean, physically, like every sense of the word, because I didn't realize like how much of a struggle and I think that's what a lot of us go through.

Brisa Alfaro 16:02
I mean, we'll run into other people, you know, on the street, that have deficits, and they go through their deficits. And they're challenging every day just to go through life, and we'll pass right by them. And don't even think twice of it. We don't even realize the challenges that they go through, just to get from their car,

to the inside of the store, just that little tiny bit, that challenge.

Brisa Alfaro 16:32
And I didn't realize that until I had to go through it myself. And that's when I realized, like, I think a lot of people, they just need a reminder, a reminder of what is and what can be, and just appreciate life, for what it is right now. And that was my wake-up call.

What It's Like On The Other Side

Bill Gasiamis 17:01
That was my story. Pretty much the guy walking past people not paying attention, and not giving a second thought to what difficulties somebody might be going through, probably be getting frustrated, because there was somebody in front of me with a wheelchair, and I had to go around them and, you know, the usual stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 17:22
And then one day, you end up in a wheelchair, and it's like, oh, shit, this is hard. Oh, my God, this is hard. And not only is it hard, I can only do it with half my body, I can't do it with that entire part of my body, and somebody else has to do the majority of it for me, you know, I was in a wheelchair where I was unable to push myself maybe for a few months in total.

Bill Gasiamis 17:48
And then rehabilitation made it possible for me to, you know, get on my feet slowly and stumble away from a wheelchair, that kind of thing. So things improved. But that was enough for me. And then my whole journey was, you know, it's 10 years and counting.

Bill Gasiamis 18:06
But a very good portion of the first three or four years was so difficult that I appreciated every other single person who I saw who had deficits who was in a wheelchair who appeared visibly unable to go about quote-unquote, life normally. And then now, It's like those people see me and I see them and we communicate to each other without talking.

Bill Gasiamis 18:42
And one of the most interesting things is seeing people who are homeless, who

are sitting, you know, on the pavement, and they're asking for money, and they're not even asking for money, they might just be sitting there and have a handout or something like that. And going up to them and just saying giving them a few dollars and then saying how are you?

Bill Gasiamis 19:04
Or what are you reading if they're reading, and then getting the full life story from that person. And the most important thing is getting them to feel like somebody actually cares. And then they say to you, you know, thanks for stopping and having a chat or talking to me or asking me or whatever. Making them feel important. Yeah, and it's not that I'm actually trying to do that.

Bill Gasiamis 19:30
I'm actually very curious about them, per se that person, because I interact with people who don't sit on pavements, the majority of the day, I interact with people that drive that have clean clothes, most of the time I interact with people who work in offices or you know, from home or whatever.

Bill Gasiamis 19:52
And it's kind of a stale way to interact with people because it's all you do you get the same of the same way. All right, and now it's like, oh, hang on a sec, what a different perspective in life just sitting down at their level, and seeing the world go by. That is even a big mind-opening kind of experience different perspective and the rest of it.

Brisa Alfaro 20:18
That's important. Perspective is everything.

Bill Gasiamis 20:22
Yeah, we can only get it from being at the same height, we can't get it from being in a different position, right. And then there's the people who we've got a really lovely organization here. It's a, it kind of pretends to be a charity, but what it is, is that it's an organization that sells a magazine.

Bill Gasiamis 20:45
And the magazine gets purchased by people who come from, you know, from who are homeless, or who don't work full time, or have a whole bunch of different reasons why they can't actively seek out a job and hold the job and all that sort of thing. And they go there, buy the book, and then they sell the book for double

what it costs for them to buy it.

Bill Gasiamis 21:08
So they might buy it for $5, they sell it for $10, the $10, half of it is split they get $5. And the other $5 goes back to the proprietor who made that book who printed that book. And then that covers the costs of that organization. So it's kind of like a charity.

Bill Gasiamis 21:31
But it's pretending to be this organization that sells and makes books for people who are disadvantaged, who can come in and have their corner somewhere in the central business district, and then just have a pile of books, and then just go and sell them.

Bill Gasiamis 21:49
And then you get to meet some amazing people there, because the book's called the Big Issue. And it's been around for, let's say, a few decades, at least, and you buy the book, and then you ask that vendor for some information about the book.

Bill Gasiamis 22:05
And you might say, you know, what's in it today? Am I gonna get anything good out of it? And then they'll tell you what they think. And then you'll ask them about whether they need anything else or how they're going, or what's happening, or how many have you sold, and they'll ramble off whatever they feel like telling you.

Bill Gasiamis 22:23
And then you'll just get to have an interaction with a person, again, that's selling a product in a different way in a different location than in a store, which is sanitized. Where the customer service is terrible, where most people don't speak to you, where you're interfering with their life where you go up to them and say, can you help me out with this shirt or with this pair of pants.

Bill Gasiamis 22:48
And it's a really refreshing experience to have with people and that I can honestly say I walked past people selling the Big Issue my entire 37 years and never noticed one of them or saw one of them. And then all of a sudden, you see them because it's kind of like I could have been very easily one of those people now who sells the big issue because what happened to me could have been more dramatic like it has been for some other people.

Bill Gasiamis 23:25
And that would have made it very difficult for me to get through my old life and wouldn't have been possible anymore. Well, it's a different version, and I would have had to evolve and those people have evolved. They've grown like you're saying, and they found a solution to a problem. And thank God there is this opportunity for them. You know, so I get where you're coming from that naivety is that what we'll call it? We'll be kind to ourselves.

Brisa Alfaro 23:57
Yeah, thank you. I honestly believe that, while I was recovering, I was also kind of naive. I didn't think that I wasn't going to recover. I knew I was going to recover. Call it naive, call it you know, stubborn, whatever you want to call it. But I mean, I was faced with facts, I was faced with a less than 1% chance to recover, I was faced with the data that they had around the world that there was less than five cases per year worldwide of the type of stroke that I had of people that have survived.

Brisa Alfaro 24:50
I mean, all roads lead to certain a certain outcome, but call it naive. Maybe I didn't I want to believe that I wanted to believe my story, I believed that I was in charge of my own story. And the way that the direction that I wanted to go in.

Intro 25:10
If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time it can be, you're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind, like, how long will it take to recover? Will I actually recover? What things should I avoid? In case I make matters worse, or doctors will explain things that obviously, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask.

Intro 25:36
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. 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.

Pons Stroke And Locked-In Syndrome

Brisa Alfaro 26:16
I wrote my own story. And I did that by a series of what I call Pinky moves in the hospital. So while I was in the hospital, I didn’t see a clearer way of how I was going to bust out of the hospital and live my life again. But I did know that I needed to continue to show my family and the doctors and everybody assigned that I was still in my body. So going back to my stroke, I had something called a pons stroke and I developed locked-in syndrome.

Brisa Alfaro 26:55
And I was essentially locked in my own body. And I couldn’t express that I could hear everything that was going on around me. So I needed to show my family and doctors a sign that I was still in my body. And I did that through a series of Pinky moves. That was the first sign of my recovery was a pinky move.

Brisa Alfaro 27:26
A lot of us think that we have to like move mountains right away, that we have to completely recover. And we have to do all these grandiose things, but you really don’t. You just have to keep flickering your pinky over and over and over again. And then you’ll get the results that you’re looking for. But you can’t give up. So yes, I flickered my pinky. That Pinky move was what built my recovery. I thought, well, if I can do that, then what else can I do? What else?

Bill Gasiamis 27:57
Can you describe what it’s like? Tell me a little bit about the lead up, the day of the stroke. Did you notice anything? Was there any any hint that something was about to happen, which was going to be life threatening?

Brisa Alfaro 28:13
No, I didn’t. I honestly believe that I was in the hospital at the right place at the right time. I was there for a symptom that was unrelated to my stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 28:26
What was that?

Brisa Alfaro 28:25

I had severe allergies. And to the point where my face was like, puffing up. I couldn't take any more Benadryl because I was about to speak on stage the next day and I was slurring full like I knew, Okay, I need to stop taking Benadryl, like Tic Tac like a tic tac I mean, I was popping them. And I realized like, I need something stronger. I need to figure out what's going on.

Brisa Alfaro 28:50
And I went in for that. And they ruled it out. They ruled out the allergy was part of my stroke. But I believe it brought me to the hospital at the right place. I was at the right place the right time. So that's the reason that I was able to get immediate help. And the What was difficult was when they had to when they realized that I was locked in, because it's such a rare, you know, something that happens to less than five cases per year worldwide. How would they know that? Oh, this one's got locked-in syndrome. It's not like that. Right? So they had to do a series of tests and figure out what was going on with me.

Bill Gasiamis 29:48
And hospital.

Right Place At The Right Time To Have A Pons Stroke

Brisa Alfaro 29:51
I didn't. I was I was sitting there while I was in the hospital because they were treating me for my allergies. He's, and as I was sitting there laying on the, you know, hospital bed, I wasn't really laying there. I was just kind of sitting there. But that's when it happened while I was in the hospital while they were treating me.

Bill Gasiamis 30:13
Wow. As far as timing is concerned, I think you're the one person in the world that has timed it perfectly to be at the right place at the right time. That is a fact. That's a world record holder right here.

Brisa Alfaro 30:29
Thank you. I don't know if I want to carry that record. But thank you.

Bill Gasiamis 30:35

There’s no better place to have a stroke. I’d rather not have the record too but if you’re gonna do something like that. Congratulations.

Brisa Alfaro 30:44
Yeah, you’re right. I mean, thank you, and they did tell me if I was anywhere else in the world, anywhere, I wouldn’t have made it. Because it was so severe, the stroke that I had was so severe. So and I didn’t really want to hear that. But I did. And they said that, you know, if you were anywhere else, you wouldn’t have made it. So you should be happy with what you got.

Brisa Alfaro 31:15
But I wasn’t so I going back to being able to move little little things, I was able to move my pinky, I was able to later move my hand later move my arm. This is all a series of, you know, weeks and months, you know, so long, but I knew that I was giving myself no other option. I was giving myself No, Plan B.

Brisa Alfaro 31:42
I knew that it was I was going to be okay. So every time I would go back to the hospital, and they would check on me, they would say Brisa is amazing. You are not even supposed to be doing all this stuff. And I would say thank you, Doc, but when am I going to do XYZ again? When is this going to come back to me? When am I going to be able to, you know, sit on my own without a wheelchair or walk without a walker or a cane.

Brisa Alfaro 32:13
And you know, every time I would go back, it was always something new. And I would always accomplish something. So I’d be proud, you know, I’m not in a wheelchair anymore. Doc, I’m walking with a walker. But when am I going to be able to walk out a walker, barista? What you’re doing is incredible. You should be proud of what you’ve accomplished. You should be happy with what you’ve accomplished. How many times do we hear that? You should just be happy. Well, I was happy.

Brisa Alfaro 32:45
Nobody was taking that from me. I was happy. I was proud of myself. But I wanted more. And why is that such a bad thing. I just wanted more. And I kept going for more. I think it’s when we start to settle. And then we start to get angry with what we’ve achieved. to the level that we’ve achieved it at. Well, we settled

when we were supposed to keep going, why don't we keep going.

Brisa Alfaro 33:20
And I think that I realized like I could be happy with what I've got right now. And I could I could be fine. I mean, I'm gonna have achieved a level of success. And I shouldn't be happy with this. But I wanted more. So I kept going for more I kept going for more, until the last time I went to the hospital and checked in with my doctor and I told him, Doc, I think this is the last time you're going to see me because I just ran a 5k.

Brisa Alfaro 33:54
And he was like, what? I'm the girl that was supposed to be in a wheelchair forever. I'm the girl that evolved to like, just you're gonna be walking with a walker forever. That's okay. I'm the girl that was supposed to be walking with a cane forever.

Brisa Alfaro 34:12
I'm not supposed to be the girl that speaks on stages and is traveling around the world and telling my story and writing a book and do it. I'm not supposed to be that girl. But who said that I'm not supposed to? Other people? Am I going to let them place their limiting beliefs on me? Or am I going to decide when I'm done? And I decided that I wanted more. So I just kept going and kept going. And that's what I've done through my whole recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 34:45
More what? So okay, I like what you said about why not more. Let's break it down. Because let's say you told me now, after what you've been through in 2004 Maybe you said to me, I wanted more money, more cars, or more mansions or something. And I'll be like, Brisa, really, that's what you got out of this? You told yourself that you need more cars and more that and more this. So your version of more is more what more health more life more what is it, what kind of more?

Brisa Alfaro 35:28
I could break down into one word. More Love. I wanted to love me, and I wasn't, I was loving myself to the degree that I had achieved. And I wanted to make that limitless. I wanted to love me completely. I wanted to love where I was at. And I wanted to love where I was going to be. And so I realized that, in order for me to achieve more, I need to love me for where I am now.

Brisa Alfaro 36:03
And I think that was a wake up call for me. I had many as we're recovering from our stroke, we're gonna have many Wake Up Calls, I mean, some of your podcasts, our Wake Up Calls for people, this podcast can be a wake up call for people. And I believe that I had many Wake Up Calls. And I realized that I the one thing that when I was laying in that hospital bed, the one thing that was tangible, was love.

Brisa Alfaro 36:39
That was the only thing. So if I expanded on that, and loved myself for surviving, loved myself for recovering to the degree that I had recovered. And been proud of myself, for all of the pinky moves that I achieved to get to that point, instead of worrying about what I have not done yet, what I have not achieved yet. Loving the point that I made right now, the place that I'm at right now, I think we need to do that more and celebrate us more. And if we do that, we're going to receive more.

Bill Gasiamis 37:25
My heart is expanding right now like I can feel what you're saying to me right now my heart's expanding, I can feel it in my heart. You know, love, and more love around what you've achieved, what you've accomplished, what you've overcome, what you're going to overcome, I think is what makes it possible for you then to achieve greater things in the future, regardless of the deficits that you're left with after the stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 37:53
Whether you're left with none or many, I think that loving yourself more opens doors and opportunities that you otherwise would not have noticed, because you wouldn't allow loving. And it's not necessarily love when somebody approaches a stroke survivor and says, Do you want to come on stage and tell your story? It's not necessarily love. But I think you wouldn't see that if you didn't love yourself.

Playing The Game – Brisa Alfaro

Bill Gasiamis 38:18
And if you didn't give yourself the opportunity to have people approach you and tell you things and ask you questions like Do you want to share your story or, or do something like that? That's the sense that I'm getting out of that. And that's

kind of how I feel like for you, it seems like it was instinctive to go there. A lot of people don't have the instinct to love themselves. You did? Is that something that you've practiced beforehand? Or was it something that came to you after all this?

Brisa Alfaro 38:54
To an extent before, but I realized that everybody around me, physically around me, was proud of me. And they love me so much. And they were proud of me. And they were cheering me on and they were my cheerleaders. Right? And no one else is going to play the game. I am going to play the game. I am going to be in the ring boxing. I'm the one that's going to be doing that.

Brisa Alfaro 39:30
If you look back onto any like huge athletes, celebrity athlete, I mean, going back to Muhammad Ali. He loved himself. And because he loved himself, he was able to achieve so much and everyone else could be telling him you're so good. You're so good. You're you're going to achieve great things. But unless he believed it himself, unless he believed that he was so good, he was the greatest. You gotta believe it yourself, you gotta love yourself.

Bill Gasiamis 40:11
And he was able to take not metaphorical blows, like, actual physical daily blows he's getting in the ring, and he's just getting hit, and getting knocked down, and getting hit, and getting knocked down again and getting back up. And he's just copping it every single day, he was really good at taking the blows getting knocked down. I think what he was really good at, other than, obviously boxing was getting back up no matter what.

Brisa Alfaro 40:39
And that's what we need to do, we need a little bit of that, right? We need to be able to get back up no matter what, we need to love ourselves that much that we know we deserve it. We deserve it, we don't deserve to wallow in our sorrows and have a pity party, because that is not going to get us to where we want to go. We need to be able to be proud of ourselves.

Brisa Alfaro 41:03
So, so what you didn't accomplish the big goal that you had set, you accomplish a bunch of other little ones, celebrate those, because what gets celebrated gets repeated. And you're going to just get that much closer to your big goals. And I

think that's why I say like, you gotta love yourself.

Brisa Alfaro 41:25
I mean, everybody else is gonna love you, the fans in the in the stadium, they're going to love you, cheerleaders, they're going to love you, networks are going to love you, the fans at home watching you on TV, they're gonna love you. But you got to love yourself, if you're going to be playing the game, you got to know, like, I love this game. I know that every move I make is not going to be the exact right move I want to make.

Brisa Alfaro 41:54
But it is going to get me closer to winning my championship is going to get me closer to winning my game, my championship, the lifestyle that I want. And I think that we break things down into like little micro micro victories, we'll be able to condense them, and then put them together into what we want our lives to look like. Like, if you if your own always micromanaging all the little things that you do wrong.

Brisa Alfaro 42:27
You're just attracting more of what you did wrong. When you see players like that they lost it. Their heads, not in the game. Well, why is that? Because they're focusing on what they did wrong. Don't focus on the past. Focus on the present. Focus on right now what can you do now that's gonna move you forward?

Bill Gasiamis 42:49
When you wake up locked-in, how long before some little movement happened in your pinky? How long? Were you not moving anything other than your eyes?

Brisa Alfaro 43:04
So I was technically completely locked in for about two weeks. And that's around the time where they were all having me. Well, they were telling my family and friends to come say goodbye to me, because it was there was no movement. There was no, what did them there was no hope.

Bill Gasiamis 43:24
They were coming and saying goodbye to you. Is that what they were saying? Well,

Brisa Alfaro 43:28

I mean, they didn't say goodbye. They were telling me to try. But I know that I knew that they were there to say goodbye to me. That it? It was a challenge. It's just like, you know, I'm telling Michael Jordan that you're not gonna win. It was a challenge.

Bill Gasiamis 43:50
It seems like more than just a challenge like that. Like it seems a lot more dramatic than that. You're Oh, are you purposely playing it down? Because you just seem like it was like, Do you know what I'm saying? Yeah. You're describing it in a way that's not as dramatic as it actually is. You're making me feel like you're just going, Yeah, whatever. You know, like, if this is a challenge, I'm going to overcome it. Yeah, this is a problem. I'm going to overcome it. People are doing everything for you Brisa they are doing every thing for you. You can't move, you're 32 you're vulnerable, you're in a hospital. And for you was just a challenge that you were gonna.

Brisa Alfaro 44:32
There was a lot of things that I was going through. I mean, for me, what worked for me was a challenge. That's the kind of person I was before. However, there was a lot of things that played into my recovery. Like, while I was locked-in my mother played something for me an audiobook and that I audiobook was The Secret. And I don't know if you know the secret, but it focuses on the law of attraction on what you focus on grows.

Brisa Alfaro 45:09
So a lot of that book is making you realize, like, what are you focused on? Because whatever it is that you're focused on, it's gonna grow. So if you're thinking in the negative, you're going to receive more of that. If you're thinking about what you want to create in this world, what you want out of this world, then you're going to receive more of that. And so I realized I needed to clean up my thoughts.

Brisa Alfaro 45:36
And that happened listening to that book. And one of the ladies that I remember hearing was the voice of a woman named Lisa Nichols. And she said in that book, she said, the first step is to ask, make a command to the universe. Let the universe know what you want, because the universe responds to your thoughts. Well, thoughts are all I had. That's all I had. Yeah, I was laying in my hospital bed with no movement with locked-in syndrome.

Brisa Alfaro 46:13
Thoughts were all I had. So if all I had to do was clean up my thoughts, then that's what I was going to do. So was it simple? No. Was it challenging? Absolutely. It was a constant battle of letting negative thoughts come into my mind. And almost like playing, pushing, pause on them, and pushing play on what I wanted to hear and what I wanted to see.

Brisa Alfaro 46:44
So I had to kind of create my own movie, of what I wanted. And I had to play that movie over and over, I had to play the movie of me, being in a healthy, happy state, being recovered completely. And living my life again, I had to play that movie, over and over and over in my mind of what I wanted. And not the not the movie, I had press pause on the movie that kept coming up that, oh, you're going to be like this forever.

The Power of Thoughts

Brisa Alfaro 47:15
Oh, it's going to always be hard for you. Oh, you might not make it. Oh, you're going to be fed through a tube for the rest of your life. You're not going to be able to breathe on your own forever. And all these things kept popping up. No, you just keep pressing play on them. What do you want to see? What do you want to hear? What do you want to live? Play on those thoughts? I don't think people realize how powerful your thoughts are. When people say thoughts become things. It's not just to say, it's a reality.

Bill Gasiamis 47:52
I completely believe you and I trust you. And I trust you because I'm trying to get you to focus on the negatives, and you are not capable of doing it almost. And, you are only focused. I'm not, I'm not saying that you didn't deal with them and overcome them and think about them and park them and pause on them.

Bill Gasiamis 47:52
Absolutely. But I've never struggled so much in an interview to get somebody to go to the hard part to the difficult part, you're telling me about the opposite. And that is great. That's perfect. That's kind of me, that's how I became after the strike. At the beginning, I was a bit of a negative guy had everything. I never

stopped and smell the roses, either.

Bill Gasiamis 48:36
I was always complaining about the things that I couldn't achieve, didn't have, all the problems in life. And I had none really, let's face it. And then after the stroke, it was like, oh my god, they weren't even problems before. It was just a bullshit story, silly story I was telling myself, I had no idea that I've got 10 years of recovery in front of me and then that in that 10 years, I'm still not going to get back all of the feeling on my left side.

Bill Gasiamis 49:05
And I'm still going to have dizzy spells and I'm still going to have balance issues every once in a while. And when I miss out on sleep, I'm going to be struggling the next day and the day after that. So your positivity is amazing and it is true. You do create your own reality with your thoughts. And if you can use them for good instead of evil, you will have good things happen. And if you use them for evil, you'll have you know not so good things happen.

Bill Gasiamis 49:35
And I'm not saying that you won't catch you won't find yourself doing that every once in a while the negative thoughts. It's about catching yourself when you're there and doing exactly what you're saying. I love the metaphorical pause on that movie. And just keep pausing it and keep pausing it that's brilliant because what that does is that acknowledges the negative thought it allows Was that to have been played to that point. And it doesn't take it out of your life, it just says that hang on a second, I don't think I like this movie.

Bill Gasiamis 50:09
And I'm not going to watch it. And, and listen to I'm going to watch this other one, which is uplifting. And it reminds me of something one of my counselors, my counselor said to me, it would have been, you know, the very first few sessions that I had with her when I was a younger guy, probably around 25. And I was pretty angry kind of guy and walked in and she said to me, go and borrow, it was back then when you could borrow VHS videos. And she said to me, go and borrow some videos that are funny.

Bill Gasiamis 50:47
Action, shoot him up, kind of videos, go borrow some that are funny and sit and

watch those. And I was like, Okay, that's an interesting request. Now, and very early on, after that, I realized what she was saying. And that's what I consumed, was making a difference to my life. And the consumption, the consumption didn't have to be food, it was, who I hung around with, and what conversations I had, it was what music I listen to it was what videos I watched what movies, I watched, what shows I tuned into in the morning.

Brisa Alfaro 51:23
Who you're hanging around?

Bill Gasiamis 51:25
Who I'm hanging around with, where I'm getting my information from all that stuff, you know, and it was food for thought. All that stuff was feeding my thoughts. And if I was putting junk in, I was getting junk out. You know, and that's what you're doing. That's what you're doing from day one in hospital while you're locked in.

Brisa Alfaro 51:55
It was and it was something that I continued to do as I was recovering. Because you, I'm sure have heard of the phrase misery loves company. And I think a lot of us stroke survivors we love, to share our deficits. And we will get caught up in that. And instead of celebrating what we can do, we immediately go to what we can't do. And I think that that's something that all of us, everyone that goes through that.

Brisa Alfaro 52:35
I mean, you can just ask anybody on the street, like how are you doing? Oh, well, you know, the bees surface level, but often it's not really celebrating the good. The great that they're going through, even if it's a little they're not they're focused on the small Oh, my car broke down yesterday. And they're still worried about something that happened a couple weeks ago.

Brisa Alfaro 52:44
But we're today. Yes, that sucks. Yes, that sucks. And I think that's what I did in my recovery. Like, I took my negatives, and I would be like, Okay, I give it the time. And space, I got mad, I got pissed. I gave it that time. And then I put it aside. Okay, now, it's on to the next. So I understand that. This, these are the cards that were laid out for me. And the air, they suck, it's a bad hand.

Brisa Alfaro 53:39
But I'm not going to focus on the fact that it's a bad hand. I'm gonna put it aside and I'm gonna keep playing. I'm like, keep playing, keep playing. And I think that's what we get caught up in. In life in general, when something happens to us, we get caught up in the how bad this situation turned out, or it's not the outcome that we were looking for. And we stay there. And we don't move into, like, what can we do now to be able to grow and learn and evolve from that? Because otherwise, we're just walking around living our old stories. And that's not what we're here for.

Bill Gasiamis 54:25
No, no. The past is meant to be in the past for a reason. You're supposed learn from it and move on from it. And you're supposed to look forward to the future. And because there's more challenges coming. So if you're letting Oh, yeah, past stack up. It's hard to overcome the new challenges because you still haven't dealt with the past challenges. Right? And it's so overwhelming. It's like, where do you start and it's so frustrating and annoying and you don't learn anything. You stayed dumb, as dumb as you were back then you know, and you got to keep moving forward. How long did it take? For your tracheotomy to come out.

Brisa Alfaro 55:04
I think it was three months. Three, three, about little over three months. Yeah. I think my G tube was the last to come out. So I was fed, there are two longer than Well, clearly this had to come out first. So yeah, and then it had to heal. And then I was able to start eating baby food.

Bill Gasiamis 55:31
How was it like, when it comes out? After three months? What does that feel like? How amazing is that experience? Or is it amazing?

Brisa Alfaro 55:41
I mean, I felt like it was another pinky move. It was something else to celebrate. I believe that everything that was happening in my recovery, because I, you turned it around and said, it's happening for me, not to me. So every time I would have like, I would get sick often. And then they couldn't take out my trach yet, because I was I would catch pneumonia or something, and they couldn't take it out.

Brisa Alfaro 56:19

So prolong it. And then after they took out my trach, they didn't realize that I was gonna develop scar tissue that blocked my airways. And till this day, I've had seven, eight surgeries on my airways, because I keep growing scar tissue. So they have to go in and basically wrote a root or my throat, take out all of the scar tissue so that I could breathe again.

Brisa Alfaro 56:47
Because I keep choking on food. I've had the Heimlich maneuver done so many times. I mean, I have a hard time breathing, talking, doing regular, you know, work because of those things. And, every time they would do that out, they would say, Oh, we got to do another surgery, I would say okay, well, you know what, it's a pinky move, it's gonna get me closer to my goals, right?

Brisa Alfaro 57:18
My goal is to be able to live again, and to be able to achieve the things that I want to achieve and to be able to impact the world and to be able to make people realize that this is not as bad as you're making it out to be. It can be beautiful. And I think a lot of times, we look at, at our situation like a burden. And we look at what we're going through as too difficult to get through.

Brisa Alfaro 58:02
And like what you were saying, Before we focus on, it's hard to get me to keep going back to focus on the negative because I do want to see what I can do. So I don't want to focus on the fact that oh, here comes another surgery, I don't want to focus on the fact that I can't remember I have short-term memory, I have aphasia, I have all these things.

Brisa Alfaro 58:23
Like if I didn't say those things you wouldn't even know because I don't focus on them. So even when I couldn't walk, I didn't focus on it. I was whatever, I'm going to walk again, whatever. Anyways, I got to do more stuff that's going to help me get there. So what I can't, I can't do it now. I will do it later. So why am I going to focus on the fact that I can't do it now, move that aside, and think about what I can do.

Efficient Use of Energy

Bill Gasiamis 58:56

It’s allocating energy to the right place at the right time for the right thing, not into wasting energy on negative thoughts on stuff that’s not possible on all that junk. And that’s so efficiently using time and energy. Because when you’re recovering from a stroke, energy is a real big issue. It’s something that we have to always manage. And we always have to make sure that we’re not fatigued and if we are fatigued, then the recovery is harder or takes a bit longer or can’t be done as much as you want to do so.

Bill Gasiamis 59:29
I love that whole, like focus on this now do this part, and then put their energy into the future then put it into the past. It sounds like also it stops you from having anxiety or depression. And I very badly describe anxiety as depression and depression as anxiety is thinking about things that are happening that may happen in the future that are gonna go wrong.

Bill Gasiamis 59:53
And depression is focusing on the past and worrying about things that did go wrong in the past, more than the present. I mean, if I’ve, if that doesn’t describe you, and you’re listening to this and you experience depression and anxiety, yet don’t Don’t take it the wrong way. I’m just sort of having a conversation. So it sounds like you had all the right opportunities to be depressed and anxious. Did you experience any of that stuff at all?

Brisa Alfaro 1:00:25
I still do. I’m human. I’m not what’s the word? It’s not like, I can’t feel those things. I can, you know, and I do. And I realized, like, I have to check myself, you know, why am I feeling this way? Why am I feeling so I get emotional, I will get severe anxiety, and depression will creep in and strike try to take over my life to the point where it’s debilitating. But I also have to stop and ask myself, Am I going to let this take over all the work that I’ve done? Is that going to be am I throwing my cards in now? Is that it? Am I just saying, Okay, well, I’m done.

Brisa Alfaro 1:01:28
No, I’m not. What I’m gonna do is acknowledge it. I think a lot of people try to ignore it. And because they ignore it, it still creeps up. It still comes up, and it still derails them. So I, instead I’m going to acknowledge it. Give it the time, give it the space, and then say, Okay, I’m gonna pause you now. I might pick you up later. But right now, I got things to do.

Brisa Alfaro 1:01:55
So I'm gonna pause you, I'll put you aside. And I'm going to play on what I want to see in my life. What I want in my future, how do I want things to play out in my life? I'm gonna play on that. So I start feeding my soul with like, audiobooks, with podcasts and reading books and watching. Like you were saying movies like uplifting movies, and I was doing all the little baby steps, all this pinky moves, that I needed for myself. In order to get me to back into gratitude. I needed to start like.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:41
I love it that's awesome, gratitude. That pause button again comes up, pause. Oh, that is depression. That is a bit of anxiety. Okay, pause, pause that. Okay, what's making me feel that? Back on task, acknowledge it, back on task, acknowledge it, back on task, acknowledge it, back on task. What they talked to us about when you learn about mindfulness the first time it's like, people think they have to do something in levels.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:09
You don't have to you just have to focus on your voice and on the guided meditation, for example of the music and then when something comes into your mind. I go, Oh, okay. That's a weird, crazy, interesting thought. Okay, back to the breathing back to the breathing. Oh, he comes another crazy weird thought. Okay, back to the breathing back to the breathing.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:35
It's like what you're saying it's exactly that, sounds like you're being mindful In a non-meditative kind of zoned out state, like in a live awakened state, you're being mindful at that time. And going, oh, here comes another voice or another story or another negative thought, okay, what are you about? Alright, tell me a little bit about that. And that's like, that's enough. I don't want to hear any more about that. Let's move on.

Brisa Alfaro 1:04:05
Yeah, well, I think think about it this way. Make it simple, the way I envision it when negative. Even negative stories hearing on the outside, you know, negativity just it's going to happen. People are just going to shoot, yeah, it's everywhere. And it's going to come to me and it might consume me, and I don't want that.

Brisa Alfaro 1:04:30
So I kind of see it. Like, do you have an iPhone Bill? Yeah. So when you kind of when you open your windows, right? You've got all these windows open or something a push notification comes through your phone, and you are right now focused on this screen, but something just came through. And now that's in front of you. That's not what you want us See? So what do you do?

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:03
Pause those notifications or swipe.

Brisa Alfaro 1:05:05
Swipe it away. Just pause it. Yeah, pause it, go back to the screen, you want to see you want to be on or swipe away. Just swipe it away. That's, that's what I just keep doing this. When, when negativity will of my own account, because that will happen. I mean, I'm invited to speak among, you know, some of these sometimes speakers that I feel I'm not worthy. I don't feel like I should be in the same room with them.

Brisa Alfaro 1:05:35
I'm not professional. I didn't go to college to be a speaker. All I'm doing is talking about my story. So who am I to be among these people? Okay, those are negative, limiting beliefs that are popping into my mind, and I don't need them. So I'm gonna swipe it away. I'm gonna swipe it away. I'm going to pause on it. So either way if it comes up again, swipe it away. What do I want to see right now? That's what you need to focus on.

The Book Limitless By Brisa Alfaro

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:09
You wrote a book? Bring me your book. Tell me bring it to the screen. Tell me how about your book.

Brisa Alfaro 1:06:19
So this is Limitless: Small Moves To Your Greatest Life After A Paralyzing Stroke. It became an international number one bestseller. And my foreword was written by the woman from the secret that I was just talking about. Lisa Nichols, she wrote my foward.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:43

My gosh, wow, that's fantastic. How long after your hospital experience did the book come into your mind? Did it become an idea that you were going to start looking at?

Brisa Alfaro 1:06:58
I've always, while I was recovering, I was always thinking about writing book. But I never thought that writing a book was for me. And I think a lot of people go through stuff like that, like, Oh, am I again, going back to that? Who am I to write a book, who am I to be, you know, to be able to put my all of my thoughts into a book. That's for other people. It's not for me, because I never thought I would do something like that.

Brisa Alfaro 1:07:06
But all it was was a pinky move. I flickered my pinky, I surrounded myself around the right people at the right time in the right place. And I was open to opportunities. And instead of saying, that's not for me, I can't do that. I would never be able to I have a cognitive like cause, like my cognitive might, I can't even say the right word, deficit, deficit, thank you.

Brisa Alfaro 1:08:03
My cognitive deficits are not there, and I are there and so present that I would never be able to, like, align my words, and be able to express myself and people would understand me, and I just didn't think that something like that was for me, those were my first thoughts. Then I paused on them. And I realized that I love myself. And I just do deserve this.

Brisa Alfaro 1:08:33
And you do too. And I could do it. And you could do it. Anyone can do it. As long as you are grateful for where you are. Right now. You're present in this moment. And you just keep pushing pause on those limiting beliefs. Because honestly, you can do anything that you put your mind to. I mean, there are pet people that are in this world that have much less than we do.

Brisa Alfaro 1:09:06
And they are making so much more on their lives. And we look at them, like think of the Paralympics. You look at them and you think, Gosh, how are they doing what they're doing? They're not looking at themselves, like they're defeated? They're not. They're focusing on what they can do.

Brisa Alfaro 1:09:27
And I think if we all do that a little bit, and start celebrating the fact that we are making pinky moves, and we're just gonna keep making pinky moves. You don't have to move mountains. You don't have to get to the top right away. You just have to keep flickering your pinky. And that's how you get to the top.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:47
Yeah, the Paralympics is such an amazing thing, isn't it? I mean, it's an example of what's possible. And I imagine more I exceed my imagination goes to the fact that most of the people there were able-bodied before they decided to become an athlete and go and try out from the Paralympics. And maybe as an able-bodied person, they thought that they weren't capable of performing at a world-class level.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:23
And they probably thought I, you know, I'm not good enough, all those things. And yet when they had whatever they experienced that caused them to be too, to question, perhaps their life and their experience and all that kind of, they probably thought, Well, what the hell, let's go for it. You know, we're only here once Well, we got to lose. Let's go for a see how far we can go see what happens.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:50
And those people end up at the Paralympics. And if you don't end up making the team, you, you still end up achieving great and amazing things in the other practice and in all the sessions in the community that you meet. And in the people that are coming through, that are looking at you going well, if he can do it, I can do it. If shaken, though, I can do it as like, Well, yeah, there's nothing negative about it, is it? Nothing at all.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:18
It's just the whole entire thing can be a positive experience, yet hard, yet tough yet? Frustrating, challenging, yet sucking out your energy and making you question all of the things you know that you thought you were going to do. But yet, it's still a positive experience writing a book for me, which I'm going through now, the cognitive abilities are not there for me to sit down and smash it out and say, three months or six months, it's taken me a year so far, I'm halfway through.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:53

And I'm getting there, and I'm doing what you're saying little paragraphs every day on my pinky moving as much as I can to get it done. And at the end, it'll be done because life is long. You can be over tomorrow for both of us for hopefully, not, but it can be over tomorrow, literally, but it's long. And and that means I've got a long time to write the book. So there's no rush, I'm not going to worry about it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:20
And if I don't ever finish it, the fact that I have written, you know, seven and a half chapters is good enough, that's good enough, that's more than I had ever dreamed of doing. Because, like you, I don't identify as a writer, I don't identify as somebody who's done literature or studied English, or any of that stuff was a tradesperson. I don't know, I don't write people like that don't write books.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:48
You know, we didn't hang around with people who speak on stages, and all that kind of stuff. I first got on the stage after my stroke in 2013, a year after my stroke who got on stage and I keep doing that. So my identity has shifted, it upgraded so much. And I was lacking so much more than I had before. Before I had it all. And I had and it was impossible to become a speaker.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:20
And it was impossible to become an author. It was impossible to be a podcaster. And then I lost so much, and everything became possible. And it's what a weird transition to possibility. I had to lose things to make other things possible. You know, it's so strange, but counterintuitive, and I love it. I love it. Because now I see loss as opportunity. Now I see setback as well, this means that something good is gonna come. So I love it.

Brisa Alfaro 1:13:58
I think when we compare ourselves to other people, that's when we're setting ourselves up for failure. So when you're talking about how long it's taken you to write your book, there are a lot of other people that are regular able bodied people that take much, much longer, but it's because we start comparing ourselves to other people that have done it in like no time. That's when we start feeling a certain way about our deficits.

Brisa Alfaro 1:14:35

That's when we compare, well, that person walked before me and that person spoke before me and that person, you know, did this before me like stop comparing. Stop comparing anything like all of your recovery. You just focus on you and I think that is something that all of us are stroke survivors, we tend to go to that all the time. We navigate like, through life, like I'm just doing me, I'm just doing me, I'm trying to recover, I'm focused, I'm not focused on other people.

Brisa Alfaro 1:15:14
But we really are sometimes. And I think we need to be able to check ourselves and like, Okay, I'm going to do the best that I can. Whether or not bill, it takes you another year, it takes you a couple more months, it happens and lightning speed all of a sudden, one day you wake up and you get it done. Or if you never get it done at all, and you just do it for yourself.

Brisa Alfaro 1:15:48
Right? We have to stop comparing ourselves to other people. And just live. That's what I've been doing. That's what makes me that's what makes me feel limitless. Because I'm not comparing myself to other people. I feel like I'm limitless. Because I don't know, we'll see what I can, what else I can do. What else can I do? What else can I do? Like? I don't know, give me something else? I don't know. Can I do it? I don't know. But let's see. Let's see. Just keep trying. And I think that putting limitations on ourselves.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:25
Yeah, absolutely. So the book, limitless, small moves to your greatest life after a paralyzing stroke, just give me a bit of a rundown of what people can expect to find in it.

Brisa Alfaro 1:16:40
So, at first I was writing it just to tell my story, I wanted to get it out, it was very therapeutic for me to be able to write it out and get it out there. But I also realized, I did need to do it for me so that I could move forward. Because a lot of it was holding me back. And I realized, like what I've learned from my recovery, should I should not hold it just for me, I should be able to share it with other people so that they too, can use it in their recovery.

Brisa Alfaro 1:17:25
So if there's anything in my book, that expresses how I recovered, and maybe

they can turn it around and apply it in their recovery, then I feel like I've done my job, I feel like I'm doing what I'm I've been sent back here to do is to help inspire other people to not give up. And this book is not just for stroke survivors. It's not, it's for survivors of life, we are all going through things.

Brisa Alfaro 1:18:01
And we all want to be limitless. we all we all wish that we had a map that tells us the directions on how to get there. But the reality is, we're all of our routes are going to be different, our end goal may be the same. Like when you're putting your end goal into a GPS, it may be the same, but it might reroute us, we might have to go through different roads to get there. But as long as our goals are the same, as long as we know where our goal is, we're going to get there. And that's kind of what my book is all about. Where I was going, where I what I needed to focus on. And what helped me. And what were my pinkie move that got me to get there. So that's what it's really about.

Unburden Yourself



Bill Gasiamis 1:19:04
Perfect. I'm reading the back cover of it. And it says, one person wrote this book is for every person living I couldn't stop reading after I started it. Thank you Brisa for never giving up and continuing to show up every day. You are truly an inspiration to me and I know to everyone that reads this book, pause and play. I think one of the most therapeutic things is the ability to tell your story.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:40
And that's what I find fascinating is when you get to interview a stroke survivor who's never really spoken about their stroke and it could be 3, 4, 5, 10 years since their stroke and they've never really spoken about it. And I find that jarring that that's the case. And they'll tell me that I'm the first person they spoke to about their stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 1:20:07
And it's like, instantaneous, I want to go over there and hug them, but I can't because they're in America, and I'm in Australia. But it's like, how is it that you're experiencing this on your own, it's a big burden to bear. And you need to share that burden, and not dump it on somebody else.

Bill Gasiamis 1:20:31
But you just need to, you know, lift that burden from your shoulders, and you need to make yourself you need to give yourself the space to feel, to recover, to overcome to do all that stuff, not just bear the burden. And I think when I see stroke survivors who write books, I don't know if it's just a thing, and I wasn't paying attention before when I was recovering in 2012, first time, and second time and third time.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:03
But this seems to be every second stroke survivors reading or writing a book. And that amount of books for stroke recovery is going to make a difference to people's lives, it's going to help them get through recovery, and audiobooks. Oh, my gosh, like now that you can just listen to them, and you don't even have to read them. That is even better. For me, it's really difficult to read for a long time.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:26
And listening is such an amazing piece of technology that has changed my life and has helped me continue to learn and get inspired and feel good about all the and learn the things that I needed to overcome all the stuff that I need to overcome.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:43
You know, so it's just great that you've done this and lovely that you're doing the work that you do, I love your Instagram. And we'll share some of that stuff at the moment in a little while. We'll also share your website in a little while. And some of the other things that you do. But I want to talk about a friend of ours. Duncan Camplin. And he is Yeah, because he listens is his biggest supporter, I reckon.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:21
And he listens. And he always sends me emails and he always sends me Instagram messages. And he reminds me of you because his Instagram is so uplifting. It's so fun, it's funny, he tells us stories about stuff that, you know, he's interested in, like, music and guitars. And he updates us with his most recent thing that he's achieved, you know whether he walked for a little bit or stood up or did some weights or whatever. Tell me about your mate Duncan, what do you think about him?

Brisa Alfaro 1:23:03
Well, one thing, when we started working together, I remember telling him, I love

his attitude. And I think that's everything. And just because I knew how positive he was. I already know how his recovery is going to go. And when he would, as you know, when he shares anything on his platform, there is most of the time a positive spin on it.

Brisa Alfaro 1:23:44
And I think that he's not looking at his recovery as poor me he's looking at it like Okay, what's next? And as a result of that, he is recovering. And he inspires me every day. He also had locked-in syndrome. And he's just such a fighter. And I'm working with a couple other locked-in syndrome survivors. And the ones whether or not they're recovering from locked-in syndrome or any other stroke.

Brisa Alfaro 1:24:29
The ones that have that positive mindset. I can't keep up with the recovery. They're just hand over fist just constantly evolving, constantly growing. And I honestly attribute that to celebration to celebrating their pinky moves. I mean, I say it that's my my tagline small move is small moves, big results. I say that all the time, because that's all you need are small moves, and celebrate those small moves, and achieve those big results. And that's what Duncan does. He celebrates, who he is, who he was, and who he's going to be. And I think more of us need to do that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:20
Yeah. You know how I try and get people like yourself who say, nearly 10 years past it, or eight years past it to go back there and you guys can't refuse or choose not to. Duncan is the guy right there right now. He's living it every single day. And that's the thing, like, I'm trying to catch him out. I'm trying to find him on his bad day. And I want to see his terrible post.

Brisa Alfaro 1:25:52
He's got so much good going for him. Why would he want to do that?

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:55
And you just don't get that. You always get the positive twist and the good out of the story, you know? And every once in a while, I'll send him a private message. And I'll say to him that looks hard. Was that really hard? Or was that a tough day? You know, of course he'll respond. He will say yes, it was a tough day. And it was hard, and it was difficult. But he does things regardless of the fact that it can be

hard or difficult or hard to overcome.

Brisa Alfaro 1:26:33
And he'll finish it off with that. So you can ask them, you know, was that tough? Or was that hard? And he will be honest just like anything. Yes, but and then he'll focus. So he'll start off with his, you know, challenge. But he'll finish with what he wants. And what his celebration. And that's, I think what more stroke survivors need some of that Juju that he's got, I have another client that is currently like struggling to come back from locked-in syndrome. And he's young, he was how old has he been? 20?

Brisa Alfaro 1:27:18
He's a young kid, the world is in front of him. And he's like, in this state and such a positive, positive kid and knows he's gonna be okay. And because of that, because of the way that he looks at everything with a glass half full. I have complete hope. I know he's going to be okay. Because he's not going to stop. Neither is Duncan. They're not going to stop. You put a challenge in front of them. It's going to be a challenge.

Brisa Alfaro 1:27:56
But they're not going to stop. And I think that's what we need more of us need to be that way. You're just not going to stop. Yes, it's a challenge. But you're gonna keep going. It's when we stop. That's when we're settling with the cards that were dealt with us. It's when we want to keep growing. It's like the ones that are in the Olympics. How many times the people going back to that? People tell them like you should just be happy with what you got right now. They wanted more. And why not?

Bill Gasiamis 1:28:33
Absolutely not. Yeah, I love it. Now. We won't tell Duncan that we've mentioned him in the podcast. I want to test him and see if he listens to every single episode right to the end.

Brisa Alfaro 1:28:48
And he probably will.

Bill Gasiamis 1:28:49
I know he'll say, Yeah, I listened. Guaranteed. I know he will, but we'll test him. Anyway. Let's see what happens. As we wrap up. Tell me where can people find

you online on Instagram? And also, is there a website that they can go to?

Brisa Alfaro 1:29:08
Yeah, so like, my handle is Brisa Alfaro. Facebook, Instagram, my website is brisaalfaro.com And also you can get a free download on pinkymoves.com. And you can also get connected to my book there. My book there I have some merchandise and I live my life by No more bad days. I constantly am trying to remind myself that this is just a moment not my day, so I have no more bad days. Reminder bracelets. It's just a moment, not your day. And I'd love to connect with anyone that is listening to your podcast Bill. I'm super excited to befriend, all your friends.

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:04
Yeah, absolutely. And I am going to share all those links back to those sites so people can find you if they need to. I love your pose with your pinky. You know who was that evil character? Dr. Evil, he does it differently right? Show us your version.

Brisa Alfaro 1:30:27
Either way.

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:28
He did it like that.

Brisa Alfaro 1:30:30
Yeah, he does.

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:34
Brisa, thank you so much for being on the podcast. I thoroughly enjoyed this episode.

Brisa Alfaro 1:30:39
Oh, I'm glad. Thank you. So did I was great speaking to you. Thank you.

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:45
Well, guys, I told you this was going to be a great episode. Thank you so much for listening. And for staying right through to the end, Bruce is an amazing person, you can follow her by checking out the shownotes recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:31:00
If you're watching on YouTube, please comment, give us a thumbs up, subscribe, hit the notification bell to get updates of new episodes as they become available. The more interaction this episode has, the more the algorithm will push the episode out to the people that need to see it and the greater the impact the interviews will make to caregivers and stroke survivors.

Bill Gasiamis 1:31:23
I've noticed that every interaction is helping the show get in front of more and more people. It really is working I'm seeing that the number of views for each episode is increasing. The view time is increasing, everything is increasing. And that is just fantastic. Because I put a lot of time and effort into each episode.

Bill Gasiamis 1:31:42
It takes about 10 hours for each episode to go live after recording, editing, and then uploading to YouTube and to the podcast apps. So that will be my gift to me. If you do that for me. comment like share that will be the gift that you give me. I really appreciate you for doing that. Thank you so much for being here and listening to another episode. I'll see you on the next episode.

Intro 1:32:07
Importantly, we present many podcast designed to give you an insight and understanding into the experiences of other individuals' opinions and treatment protocols discussed during any podcast or the individual's own experience and we do not necessarily share the same opinion nor do we recommend any treatment protocol discussed.

Intro 1:32:24
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Intro 1:32:47
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resource to diagnose treat, cure or prevent any disease for therapeutic purposes or as a substitute for the advice of a health professional.

Intro 1:33:01
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Intro 1:33:26
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