

A Bleed On The Brain Recovery - Leigh Cleary

Leigh Cleary was 39 when he attended a music festival with friends but soon after he arrived home he experienced a bleed on the brain.

Instagram

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Transcription:

Leigh Cleary 0:00

I think if you're lucky, you're surrounded by loved ones, most of your loved ones want to talk to you about it. They just don't know how to bring it out, because they don't want to hurt your feelings. They don't want to remind you of that time.

Leigh Cleary 0:13

But I think, listening to what you were saying there, a real moment for me was when I stopped thinking about what it was like to be me before my stroke and after stroke, when I stopped thinking of those people as two different people, I am, what I am and everything that's happened in between now and being born. It's just made me who I am for the good and for the bad.

Intro 0:38

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

Bill Gasiamis 0:51

Hello, and welcome to another episode of the recovery after stroke podcast. This is episode 213. And before we get into that, I just wanted to let you know that in August, the podcast reached more downloads than ever before. In fact, it was more than 6300 downloads for the month of August.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14

It is an amazing figure, it is a figure that has taken the best part of seven years to achieve. So I first started this podcast in 2015. And it was intermittent, I wasn't releasing a lot of episodes, and I wasn't very good at podcasting, And I wasn't very consistent.

Bill Gasiamis 1:34

I was still recovering from the stroke and from all the challenges that came after brain surgery. And it wasn't something that I was doing. As often as I'm doing now, there wasn't a lot of people that I was able to interview because I didn't know a lot of people, and a lot of people didn't know me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:52

So now that I'm at that stage where people have got to know the podcast, and people are contacting me to get onto the podcast so that I can interview them, then it's been a much easier process for me to release an episode more regularly and get more people coming onto the show that has resulted in consistency, and that has resulted in people from all around the world, finding the podcast and downloading it and listening to it.

Bill Gasiamis 2:20

So this was an amazing thing that I experienced with the podcast, just in the last month. So I'm very excited. And I just wanted to share with you. So now that that's been said, thank you for listening, and thank you for being here, and for downloading an episode I really appreciate it.

Bill Gasiamis 2:41

If you're a stroke survivor with a story to share though, and you have an experience with stroke, and you've been thinking about reaching out to be a guest

on the show but we're waiting for the right time. This is it. Now, if you go to recoveryafterstroke.com/contact, you'll find a form that you can fill out to apply to be a guest on the show.

Bill Gasiamis 3:00

As soon as I receive it, I will respond with more details on how you can choose a time that works for you and me for us to meet over zoom and record an interview. So get on and do that. As soon as you get to the end of this episode or pause this episode.

Introduction - A Bleed On The brain



Bill Gasiamis 3:18

Do that and then come back. Now my guest today is Leigh Cleary. He was 39 when he experienced a bleed in the brain after attending a music festival with friends. Leigh Cleary welcome to the podcast.

Leigh Cleary 3:32

Thank you very much for having me, Bill.

Bill Gasiamis 3:34

My pleasure, mate. 13 minutes and 24 seconds to work out all the technical stuff and here we are.

Leigh Cleary 3:39

Yeah, well, that's pretty good for me, actually to be honest. It could take a lot longer. So we're doing okay.

Bill Gasiamis 3:47

We are, tell me a little bit about what happened to you man.

Leigh Cleary 3:50

So second of April 2017. In fact, I'll take you to the day before Bill if I may. So I went to a concert with some friends down in the south of England, which is where I'm originally from, had a really great night out, really good time. I felt like I was in good form, my friends thought I was in good form.

Leigh Cleary 4:11

On the way home, I felt particularly tired. It was quite a long drive two-and-a-half hours or so. Maybe I'm just a little bit hungover maybe I've just kind of overdone it the night before and then I've got home. All was pretty standard had some dinner with my wife, my daughter was actually ironically in Southampton where I was it was the school holidays so she goes down spend some time with her grandparents.

The Lead-up To A Bleed On The Brain



Leigh Cleary 4:39

That night got up to go to the loo in the house we lived in right in the countryside. No natural light, got to go for a loo, come out of the bathroom. I genuinely thought we'd been broken into because I felt like somebody had smashed me over the head with a baseball bat or something big, fell over, was on the floor in the hallway between our bathroom and our bedroom.

Leigh Cleary 5:06

My wife obviously heard this big bang, come out and said what's happened? And I laughed, I've fallen over. And my sense of humor tells me that when an adult falls over, it's generally quite funny. Then she said, Okay, well, let's get you up. She turned the light on. And I said, you have to turn that off, I've got a really bad migraine or something going on.

Leigh Cleary 5:33

Luckily, she kind of said, no, there's something wrong with you. So my face had all drooped. And I mean, every symptom that you hear about for stroke I had. And then she sat me on the side of the bed she said I need to turn on the lights I just need to look for you.

Leigh Cleary 5:49

I'm going to call the ambulance. I'm a man of no fuss, like most British men I'm kind of quite conservative and quiet, kind of, don't worry about it, I'll sleep it off, and I'll be okay tomorrow I'll be good. But I knew if I'm honest, I knew all the symptoms. I've done enough first aid courses in various jobs that I've had over the years.

Leigh Cleary 6:09

I thought I'm having a stroke here. This is what's happening. And she said to me, it looks like you're having a stroke, but you can't be having a stroke. And I was pretty fit. I think the week before I've done a 10k run, you know, that can't be happening to you.

Leigh Cleary 6:24

And I kind of said, You're right. No, it absolutely can't be happening to me. And she said, But I'm gonna call the ambulance just in case. And she actually said to me, I think years ago, I said to her worst case scenario, if you call an ambulance, you might look a little bit of a fool. Worst case scenario. But that's the worst that can happen. Whereas if you don't call an ambulance, someone could die or whatever.

Leigh Cleary 6:47

So luckily for me, she did they immediately said, we think you're having a stroke we need to get you to a hospital. We went to Northampton hospital. And I think this was the only time I was scared Bill. We went in, my wife was in bits. And they were talking about they were going to send me to another hospital further away

in Oxford.

Leigh Cleary 7:07

And my wife said, Well, I don't know how I'm gonna get home. Now how will I get home from Oxford? And then the doctor just said right can we all just stop and I remember his exact words. So I'm going to give you a dose of reality. If we don't get him to Oxford, he will die we haven't got the facility here to do what we need to do to keep him alive. But if we get him to Oxford, he's got a 50-50 chance. I'm thinking this is actually really happening isn't it?

Bill Gasiamis 7:39

They're bloody telling you mate. Wow, what a nuts situation.

Leigh Cleary 7:44

Yeah, I mean, let's say day before, out with friends, having a great day, quite a high-powered job at the time was kind of I think I was on call that weekend and all this was going through my head still when they're telling me I got 50-50 chance of seeing through this if we get into the hospital on time and that still would have been about 45-minute drive away in an ambulance.

Leigh Cleary 8:07

So he's kind of thinking Oh God, this is pretty bad. So it was the only time I was actually scared and then to be fair, I got into Oxford hospital and they kind of put me at ease that they said you couldn't be in a better hospital for this you know, we are experts and renowned around the world for neurosurgery and stuff they kind of put me under the next day I woke up.

Cardiac Arrest After A Bleed On The Brain

Leigh Cleary 8:29

But just for good measure Bill, the night after I had a cardiac arrest. So the stroke have been a cardiac arrest the day after everything just give up and they said it was as a result of the stroke the body just kind of shut down so they resuscitated.

Leigh Cleary 8:43

I mean, I don't remember any of that. People asked me a lot was that scary like my friends would say was that scary having a cardiac arrest? And said I just woke up in a different room. So I remember going to sleep very vividly in this room and there was a couple of old boys opposite of me that I'd had a bit of a conversation

with late in the night.

Leigh Cleary 9:05

One in fact George I remember fought in World War Two and have done hand-to-hand combat which I was absolutely flabbergasted by you know, he said you know when you're beyond enemy lines and had to, I kept pushing him for the answer.

Leigh Cleary 9:22

He said, yes, Leigh I've killed people. I was Oh my god, you know, that must have been quite an experience. He said Well, it's you or them. The next morning I woke up in a different room. And there was a nurse kind of cleaning down a workspace so I woke up I said I think I'll sleep here.

Leigh Cleary 9:43

And she said you've had quite the night and I said have I? She said how'd you feel I said my chest hurts a bit and that's where they put the jumpstart machine back on me. But yeah, that's all I remember of that bit and to be honest the next two weeks we're a bit of a blur.

Leigh Cleary 10:02

When my friends talk to me about it the easiest bit was being in hospital, the hardest bit was coming out. And yeah, it was the bit that I was so hungry to do and get out hospital because it's just bloody horrible being in a hospital for any reason for any period of time you miss all your comforts.

Leigh Cleary 10:17

And I was so eager to get out. But actually the minute I did, and I remember literally sitting in my car when my wife was driving, obviously, I remember sitting there thinking, I actually got to go home and I'm about to combat the stairs, and that to combat the little steps to get into my house. All these things that you take for granted suddenly become massive challenges, you know? So that was probably the scariest bit was actually coming out hospital.

Bill Gasiamis 10:44

Absolutely, they become challenges. So the concert, was it a long event? Was it more intense than normal? Was it just a regular long drive to a great event? Was there any drinking and substances? Any of that stuff?

Leigh Cleary 11:04

No, no, at the time I worked in Southampton Monday to Friday or Monday to Thursday. It was actually you know, the band Oasis? It was a tribute band for them, me and my friends back in the 90s were well into them it kind of seemed like a weekly or monthly thing to go see them so we went to see this tribute band, it was with two of my oldest friends that we used to go and see all that music together.

Leigh Cleary 11:27

So it's kind of like a little mini-reunion in an area of Southampton that we always used to go out on a socializing. I had a few beers, no doubt. But it's funny you say about substances because one of the doctors was convinced that the night before I'd been doing cocaine and because he said it was very common to have either a brain hemorrhage or bleed on the brain. And even my wife was like, because maybe in my youth I had kind of done things like that. Even she was like, if you have been I won't be mad here and now we just need to get you better. So just tell them if you have.

Bill Gasiamis 11:59

I'll be mad later.

Leigh Cleary 12:02

Honestly, right up to about a day before I left hospital, this same doctor said to me, you know, I'll never tell anybody if you have and I said on my life on my daughter's life, not for years other than anything like that. And you know, that was years ago.

Leigh Cleary 12:21

15, 20 years ago, he said we thought in the immediate lead up to your situation, maybe but no, so it was a boozy night. But no more than the average night out with friends you know, so it was certainly normal for me and my buddies so yeah, very normal week leading up to it a few little stresses at work, but nothing. A lot of friends have quite a big job then was it the stress at work, because I think that can bring on obviously high blood pressure and hypotension and stuff. But no, I've never been somebody to feel stressed. My wife would say she'd like it if I could be stressed every now and then, you know?

Leigh Cleary 12:22

So how old were you?

Leigh Cleary 12:57

39.

Bill Gasiamis 12:59

You're 39 on top of your game, what kind of work we're you doing?

Leigh Cleary 13:19

So I worked for B&Q which is like a DIY retailer in England, the biggest actually in England and I kind of led up kind of one of the departments there or looked after kind of like kitchens and bathrooms, basically for the retail side of the business. So it's pretty big job, but I loved it to be honest, at the time, I really loved it. My perspective changed after I kind of got well again. But yeah, at the time, I loved it. I didn't find it particularly stressful work with a great bunch of people who were super supportive, actually, when all this happened to me.

Post-Stroke Deficits

Bill Gasiamis 13:53

So it's been a few years. And what did you come home with that you had to recover from? Obviously, the heart issue was probably really taxing on the body, but then a lot of stroke survivors often wake up with some issues.

Leigh Cleary 14:11

So complete paralysis on one side the left side. The hardest, it was tough learning to walk again was really, really tough. And, you know, full credit to anybody that has to go through that, you know, I was young, able to run 10k, runs and stuff like that.

Leigh Cleary 14:32

And I thought, okay, you know, even when in hospital when they said you might have to think about the fact that you're going to be in a wheelchair. I remember having a bet with the physio because he said to me, Leigh I think the reality is you probably will be walking aids or be in a wheelchair.

Leigh Cleary 14:49

And I said, absolutely will not be doing that. I completely accept that. I might not play football again. We'll play tennis again, or run 10k again, I can live with that. But I'm not going to be in a wheelchair, they started talking about measuring my house up for ramps and stuff.

Leigh Cleary 15:08

And I said, we're not doing that. And I literally said to him, if you do that I'm gonna be really mad and unhappy. So, yes, I have that. But the hardest thing I think was the fatigue. I have no energy.

Bill Gasiamis 15:27

You know, that part where you said, I'm not going to have any of that I'm not going to have this in my house that's not going to be installed? Do you think that that's got something to do with your recovery in that, because of that you had a better recovery? Or do you think that the recovery was going to go well, anyway, they just didn't know how well it was gonna go?

Leigh Cleary 15:50

I'm really belligerent person. And I think I'm really kind of, you know, against the odds, I'll always kind of back myself to prevail. And in any situation, I'm super competitive. So I think that helps. But, you know, I honestly think it's Lady Luck. It happened to me, you know, it's terrible it happened to me, it was horrendous at the time, and all those things. But at 39 wherever you're patient. I mean, I was lucky, I had a quick and good recovery. But I think if you're patient you can get there. 39 I think your chances obviously are better than if you're 79 or 89.

Bill Gasiamis 16:30

And also depends on how badly impacted the area of the brain was that has been injured. So some people it's catastrophically impacted, and then it's not coming back online. And for other people, it's kind of I'm not sure if the woods temporarily impacted, or the amount of cell death hasn't been that dramatic. Yeah, so it comes back online. And a little bit sooner or, better.

Leigh Cleary 16:58

I was very lucky. My wife was amazing. And it's funny, I don't talk that much about it now. It'll crop up from time to time with friends and family and stuff, and everyone says, so my wife's name is Nikki and they always say, Nikki saved your life, you know, when she called the ambulance. And I said to them well, that is true, but I was very clearly having a stroke.

Leigh Cleary 17:23

You're not just gonna say crack on and get on with it's okay. I said, so, I think yeah, it's absolutely true. But she did what anybody would do. But actually, she

saved my life when I came out of hospital. Because when I couldn't get out of bed, because I was depressed, and I just had no energy and all those things.

Leigh Cleary 17:39

And there was nurses come in because the stroke aftercare, I have to say it was fantastic. In the part of England that it was, you know, absolutely brilliant. She literally made me get out of bed, made me get changed, get some clothes on, you know, have a shower. All those things. So, actually, that was a bigger impact than call the ambulance.

Bill Gasiamis 18:01

Yeah, right. Okay. That is important. A lot of people do struggle, especially after coming home. Because you're coming home different. And there's a whole bunch of things that are impacting your ability to be yourself or the previous self, or whatever you identify as before you had the stroke.

Leigh Cleary 18:17

I think mentally I've struggled with it for years.

Bill Gasiamis 18:23

So what can't you do now?

Leigh Cleary 18:27

There's nothing really nothing that I couldn't do before. You know, I've even managed to have a little game of football here with me and stuff like that. So there's nothing particularly you know, I feel weaker as a person. So I've really struggled with this for a while. And what I mean is, physically, you know, I felt quite fit and strong, and I was walking down an alleyway a while back.

Overthinking It?

Leigh Cleary 18:50

A very safe part of the country. But not like a hotbed for crime. I was walking back to a hotel as a business night out actually going out for a bite to eat with some work colleagues, walked down this alleyway and thought, if somebody attacks me now, my balance isn't great. I'm going to be in real trouble. Whereas previously, I would have been like, if somebody attacks me, they'll get a bloody good hiding, you know?

Leigh Cleary 19:15

That for years, I've really struggled with that. And my wife had to say to me one day, you know look, when was the last time you got into physical combat with somebody? And I said, I don't know when I was about 15. She said, Yes, exactly. So for half of your life, you've not have to do that. What makes you think suddenly, people are gonna look at you now and go, let's attack that guy. So yeah, balance was probably the last thing to come back. Being really steady on the feet.

Bill Gasiamis 19:44

I'm laughing. I really relate to that. I relate to that part where you're not feeling I know your words were weaker. I don't feel weaker. I just feel vulnerable, more vulnerable.

Leigh Cleary 19:58

Yeah, no, I think that's probably a good way of putting it

Bill Gasiamis 20:00

You know, and vulnerable, for me also means that because of my mortality because of the fact that I am a mortal now, where before I didn't ever consider the possibility.

Leigh Cleary 20:16

Your own your own mortality is a hard thing to face.

Bill Gasiamis 20:22

I feel more vulnerable to the elements of life than to just life, the fact that with life comes death. So like that part, makes me feel vulnerable. And then the fact that somebody might jump me well, whatever, that's a possibility to very rare, but it's a possibility.

Bill Gasiamis 20:39

But I do feel like I'm less likely to be able to resist an attack if there was kind of like a just a random attack that happened. And then I really get no sense of like self, like I'm able to be self protective, I don't know what the word is, but feeling like I'm able to kind of look after myself in that sort of situation. I feel like I'd be able to be more easily overcome. And, that's the weird part. Like, I don't know whether it's true or just imaginary or just blokes being, you know, blokes.

Leigh Cleary 21:35

I think is that actually do think is that I think it's to do with, you know, blokes being blokes, and you know, I've always been considered a man's man and all those things in a bit of a, I wouldn't say a tough guy, that'd be pushing it too far. But certainly somebody that could look after themselves if the need arose, I think then to suddenly think, wow, I can do that.

Leigh Cleary 22:00

But then the logical side of my wife says, why would you even think that when you've never had to do that for such a long time, you'll your life's not like being Bruce Willis in Die Hard, that's not happening to you. Every day, you work in an office, when you go out, you go to nice bars, or restaurants or hotels or whatever, you always stay in, as you say, you always set a nice part of town wherever you stay. You know, I'm not going to get attacked that way. But I guess that your mind does funny things to you. And if you feel like that, there's not a lot that anybody can say to change that. I think if you feel like that it's something you're always going to feel, isn't it?

Bill Gasiamis 22:37

It sounds like you think of yourself more highly than other people think of you, you think of yourself as a bit of a.

Leigh Cleary 22:48

Definitely more than my wife.

Bill Gasiamis 22:52

I love it. I love it. She knows the real you. You see something different in the mirror and she's like it. I know the real him.

Leigh Cleary 23:00

But when I look in the mirror, I see Arnold Schwarzenegger like the Terminator.

Bill Gasiamis 23:06

Yeah I hear you. That's interesting. So how old was the daughter at the time?

Leigh Cleary 23:15

So she's getting GCSE results next week, so should have been 11. So the impacts on her wasn't immediate, because we didn't tell her. Which I'm still not sure is the right thing or wrong thing. But I mean, my friend, my brother, a few people that come to see me in hospital, in that immediate aftermath, just broke down into

tears because of how I looked.

Leigh Cleary 23:41

You know, since one of my friends, he was supposed to be here to bloody support me. And you cry like a baby, you know? He's like, well, I'm not used to seeing you like this. And I thought, well, if this is like a man of the world, that seen, you know, different things have been faced with other people being poorly before what is making little girl in protected from all that kind of thing.

Leigh Cleary 24:01

So we waited and didn't tell her for a while. She stayed with some relatives for a bit while my wife was doing the traveling to and from hospitals and stuff. So yeah, I think it had a big impact of her. She laughs about it now and jokes about it. Now we sort of joke about, you know, when I was poorly and her friends will say, well, did you have a cold or something?

Leigh Cleary 24:22

And she was like, No, dad died for six minutes. You know, the stroke and cardiac arrest it was really bad, you know? So, I think it had a massive impact on her but I think she's quite resilient like me, she just bounced through it, I think because I was constantly like, don't listen to what anybody says, I'm not gonna be in a wheelchair. I'm not gonna do that, I will be back.

Leigh Cleary 24:41

She used to play football at the time, and I'll be back from the sidelines cheering you on. Fortunately for us, it did turn out like that. I'm saying it was good six months before I was able to do everything but you know, I appreciate how lucky I am because I know there's people out there that don't get that same break. That's for sure.

Dead For 6 minutes

Bill Gasiamis 25:02

So, death for six minutes. Was it just like being asleep? Did you see anyone on the other side?

Leigh Cleary 25:09

I don't remember anything about it. I mean, you know, I can joke about it now, obviously, because it never quite come to fruition. But I always say that the devil

just wasn't quite ready for me. But now I don't remember any of it. I literally woke up in a different room.

Leigh Cleary 25:29

Nobody told me and then a consultant speak to me the next day, I almost would have thought someone was lying because I just don't remember any of it. But apparently, they did the resuscitation on me and then apparently I just bolted up, took this great big intake of air and started snoring. And the consultant who oversaw it all said, one of the nurses said is that normal, he said, if he's making a noise he's alive isn't it? That's really good. They actually said to me, keep snoring.

Bill Gasiamis 26:05

Wow man, just thinking about it and talking to somebody that's been to the other side, like, it's bizarre and intense. And it makes me feel really grateful for modern technology, amongst other things. And it's, I know, it's just intense, I just can't get my head around that even though I haven't been there, where you've been. And I've been kind of in another kind of phase of that.

Bill Gasiamis 26:29

It still fascinates me that I'm able to talk to you and you were clinically considered dead for 6 minutes. It's just intense. And it's amazing that we're talking on a podcast about stroke, you're on the other side of the planet. I'm over here in Australia. And here we are. And there's never been a better time to be unwell to have a stroke. Not that I want anyone to be unwell or have a stroke. But if there was a time in history, this is it. You know, this is the time.

Leigh Cleary 27:01

I think COVID has helped, you know, Bill, because we're used to doing this sort of thing more now. I think, if you just said to me in the immediate aftermath, you know, would you go and talk to this chap in Australia, about having a stroke, I said absolutely not. I'm not gonna talk on a screen to somebody over the other side of the world, you know, just wouldn't have the time. But I think now that this, you know, for work for a lot of people for communicating to family is the new normal, I think you're right, from a support point of view, there's not a better time to have, I guess, any kind of illness because you've got that support at the touch of a button.

Bill Gasiamis 27:40

Yeah, it's absolutely amazing. So you connected to me, because you're an Instagram, and you're following my Instagram page, the @recoveryafterstroke page. And I put a call out for people to come on onto the podcast, see who was interested in, I got overwhelmed. I've got episodes booked in every Friday and Saturdays Australian time, for months.

Bill Gasiamis 28:05

And it's good and bad. It's not bad, because I don't want to do it, it's bad, because people are waiting a long time to get on. What made you feel like you needed to get on and share your story? Because you haven't done this before. In this type of format.

Leigh Cleary 28:21

I did a little bit of volunteering a while back for the local Stroke Association. And that was very similar to this peer-on-peer kind of talking and counseling. And I found that really rewarding. Talking to kind of, especially people of similar age that were going through that kind of immediate aftermath and being able to say, you know, what, to feel the way you're feeling, you know, we were talking about being feeling really vulnerable.

Leigh Cleary 28:48

I was talking to another chap, maybe similar sort of age to me early 40s. And he just said, you know, I just feel like I can't, I won't go into his personal details, but he said there are certain things that he can't do now that he used to be able to do and I just said that's gonna be normal.

Leigh Cleary 29:05

If half of your body is feeling temporarily redundant, then you're just not going to be able to do what you used to do. So it's completely normal to have that to feel a little less than you maybe did, but it will come back in time if you work it, I guess. Or I guess you get used to a new you new version of you.

Bill Gasiamis 29:24

Yeah. Did part of the talking about it in your volunteering role. Help make the memory less triggering less anxious, anxiety-provoking, because there is a real reason to talk about what you've been through for lots of people for lots of different things, right.

Bill Gasiamis 29:47

And it's part of a process called exposure therapy. You talk about it, the more you talk about it, the more it becomes something that you're talking about, rather than something that you're reliving. Did you find that talking about it helps do that kind of put it in the past where it belongs as an event, rather than something that's happening?

Leigh Cleary 30:08

You know what I'm talking about it now I feel like I'm telling the story about something that happened to somebody else. It doesn't feel like it happened to me. I mean, I'm not stupid. I know it did. Absolutely, it did. But it feels so I guess detached now from who I am. To get there I shaped me into being who I am.

Leigh Cleary 30:29

But I feel so detached from it happening that I can talk about it. And I think you're right, like it is good therapy. I think it does certainly makes me realize how lucky I am when I talk to people, you know, but for the grace of God, as they say, you know, it could have gone the other way.

Leigh Cleary 30:43

And, you know, wouldn't be here now. So yeah, I think it's really good therapy. And I think it's nice to be able to empathize with others that are going through a tough time, as well, I think that makes you feel, you doing what you're doing talking to all these different people that are in different stages of their recovery must be quite rewarding to know that you're helping because I can tell you now, you know, I'm really grateful for the chance to talk to you today it's helping me so shows how it must be helping other people as well.

Bill Gasiamis 31:13

Yeah, I never expected it, believe it or not. I mean, I know it's obvious, but I never expect that it was about me this podcast at the beginning. And then as I started to talk about it more and more, I started to feel like you I started to seem like I was talking about something else, somebody else or a past me that I didn't really associate with, I've got the symptoms, or the aftermath of it.

Bill Gasiamis 31:38

But again, even the aftermath, even the numbness, the balance issues, or the things that I've got, I kind of don't remember a time where I when I didn't have them, although I know that I actually did I know because I still also play football.

Bill Gasiamis 31:52

And I also used to have no balance issues. And I also used to have no numbness in my left side. But now it's like, it's not, it's not like, I'm comparing myself to that time anymore. I've stopped doing that. I've stopped saying, oh, gosh, I remember a time when I didn't have this stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 32:12

Oh my God, I wish it went back to that I don't do that. So every time I speak about it, puts it further and further into a place where it's not harming me when I talk about it. And it's being really useful when I do talk about it for the other people that are early on in that stage. So that's, I've come I've spoken about it in 200 episodes, so many times, and so many other people that I've spoken to it about, and I hang out with stroke survivors everywhere now in Melbourne.

Bill Gasiamis 32:39

So yeah, it's like a real big, thing that we see that I am experiencing through a different lens. And it's a completely different filter. It's not the same filter than it used to be. It's hard to describe why I'm saying it is I want to encourage people to talk about it, to talk about what they've been through, and to as many people as possible, as often as possible.

Bill Gasiamis 33:14

Of course, if the people aren't willing to talk to you about it, then that's cool too. But from that perspective, I'm just trying to encourage people and give them another example of you, hopefully, that's sort of been through that similar place that I've been through.

For Good And Bad



Leigh Cleary 33:28

I think, you know, if you're lucky, you're surrounded by loved ones, most of your loved ones want to talk to you about it. They just don't know how to bring it out. Because they don't want to hurt your feelings. They don't want to remind you of that time.

Leigh Cleary 33:41

But I think listening to what you were saying there. A real moment for me was when I stopped thinking about what it was like to be me before my stroke and after stroke. When I stopped thinking of those people as two different people. I am what I am and everything that's happened in between now and being born. It's just made me who I am for the good and for the bad.

Intro 34:02

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?

Intro 34:20

Doctors will explain things. But obviously, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask. 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.

Intro 34:42

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.

Leigh Cleary 35:06

I mean, that minute when you stop thinking about what it was like before, because for years, it's easy to become a victim and not a survivor, it's really easy to do that. But I think for ages, I was a victim of it in my own mind going, well, of course, you know, something would happen where I'd lose my balance or feel really fatigued or whatever. So maybe have to go home from work early, I think the old Leigh wouldn't have done this.

Leigh Cleary 35:34

But I think I then just got to a point of, you know, what, this is what I am, forget the old Leigh, current Leigh, the new Leigh or whatever, just focus on the future and what you can be and what you can achieve in life and what you need to do still to have a good life.

Leigh Cleary 35:50

So I think that minute, you know, I wouldn't say there was a specific minute, but I remember just a while back thinking, You know what, I just don't think of those two things anymore, like pre and post-stroke, I just think of me as me, and I think once you it, it becomes that I think everything becomes a little easier to deal with.

Bill Gasiamis 36:07

Yeah, you know, when you have a sports injury, this is how I relate to it now. And I didn't play football for a lot of years, and never professionally anything, or any any sort of high level. But I, I injured my left toe, my little pinky toe, my left or my left foot.

Bill Gasiamis 36:26

And what happened was I kicked the ball. And at the same time, or no, what I was doing is I was stopping somebody, somebody from kicking the ball. And as I put it out, my foot out, he kicked my toe. And the toe never broke, never got damaged to that extent. But what it did was really bruised the bone, it really deeply bruised

the bone, and then it had some swelling around it.

Bill Gasiamis 36:52

And then for many, many years afterwards, every time I would be in a position where I was tackling somebody and we just had normal contact, the toe would swell up and get really impacted and affected and let me know that it's struggling again, or it's been injured again or something. But it was never the same impact that hit it every time afterwards.

Bill Gasiamis 37:19

And even to this day, even as I'm talking about now, I can sense that that toe feels differently from my other toe. And I never think about it in a way. It never does the hole in my head. It never does the hole. Oh my God, I wish my toe was different. It and I never do the I remember when my toe didn't do that. It just always reminds me that it's there. Without really stopping me from being who I want to be. If I was able to play football now, which I probably couldn't.

Bill Gasiamis 37:52

It wouldn't stop me from playing. But in the game, it will remind me every so often in a tackle. But here I am. And I just need to be aware of it. And I think it's a reminder, and I need to be aware of it so that I can alter the way that I go about things, do things differently, smarter, more cautiously. I'm not sure what the actual correct sentences. But that's kind of how I feel about myself now.

Bill Gasiamis 38:17

I've got to adjust, and I've got to find a new way to apply myself to the daily tasks that I have to do. So that I can get through my day. And I can't do it, like I used to do before because there'll be a Foley, that would be something that's not right. Because I I have to I'm different, I have to go about things differently.

Bill Gasiamis 38:39

So this whole thought process is really kind of expanding my horizons and my ability to contemplate how I'm going to go about my day where, whereas before, I never thought about anything, and I was never mindful in the moment. Now I am a lot because I've got to pay attention to where my leg is, for example, if I'm on a ladder, or if I'm going up steps.

Bill Gasiamis 39:04

So it actually brings my attention away from the past, away from the anxiety of

the future. What does the future hold? And it makes me really focus and concentrate on the now because if I don't I'm going to trip going up that ladder or trip coming down those stairs. Do you know what I mean?

Leigh Cleary 39:23

I totally get that, that really makes sense actually.

Getting Back To Work After A Bleed On The Brain



Bill Gasiamis 39:30

So with work for you, how did you go about getting back to work and were you able to go back to your old job?

Leigh Cleary 39:37

I was and you know what I think and I think I mentioned earlier that my work colleagues and my bosses at the time were fantastic when it happens. So when my wife made that call, be it tomorrow or for the foreseeable future. You know, it's really really poorly this has happened.

Leigh Cleary 39:59

My line manager, Simon at the time was fantastic. He was like, we're gonna get you a hotel near the hospitals, you have to do the driving. She was like, No, I'd rather be in my own bed at night, don't need that. And he said, we'll get your driver from to and from, you know, the hospital to hospital.

Leigh Cleary 40:19

She said, Well, they told me that you need to supply the next three or four days. But there's also a chance that you might not so you don't want to be with a stranger and find out that my husband just died. And that was really hard for me to hear when I'd come out, because she was telling me all this, about how great these people were for me.

Leigh Cleary 40:38

But when I went back to work, I have to say, I think, and it wasn't for the one of trying to understand, I think, because I appeared to everybody, like everyone was like, Oh, I mean, at the time, I think I thought at least lost a bit of weight. And he's gone a bit gray. Because that had happened. But I think some of that was, you know, I was turning 40. So that's going to happen, right?

Leigh Cleary 40:57

So the grain is not the losing weight normally goes the other way. And it certainly has since. But I think every for at least just back as normal, I looked the same as a little unsteady on my face and everything. I think someone said to me, you just look a lot more thoughtful about your movement now.

Leigh Cleary 41:11

And so for that, because I have to be, you know, I can't just swing around on a swivel chair now and jump up and go down to the coffee machine or whatever, I have to turn out a bit more generally, and think about where I'm going and think about what I need to do.

Leigh Cleary 41:25

But I think I really lost my sense of what's the word, my inner monologue, that filter. And the job I have had to keep everybody happy, was really important to keep everybody motivated and happy. And I just sit there in meetings, and I wouldn't sweat when we were in poker.

Leigh Cleary 41:46

And I just literally say that's not really, right. In a really unprofessional way, I think in the end, me and that business just came to the agreement that it was, you know, better that we parted ways, and we did it on friendly terms. And, you know, it's kind of financially beneficial for me and stuff. So it was, it was all good. But I think it was hard for them to understand.

Leigh Cleary 42:07

We're not come back, but I was never going to be the person that I was before is never going to be as bothered about a multibillion-pound organization not selling quite as many kitchens as they needed to. Because now we're looking at that in perspective.

Leigh Cleary 42:20

So there's not really a big deal is it because they're still going to be able to function tomorrow, everyone's still going to have a job and nothing terrible is going to happen if we're going to take that extra kitchen or whatever. So I think, you know, once that happens, we have our sense of perspective on that job was completely different. And I needed to be a different person to what I am carrying on that job.

Leigh Cleary 42:43

So work is completely different for me. Now I run my own little business, which is tuning cars remapping cars all on a laptop, which is great, because I can manage my own time, you know, a long day for me these days is like eight hours at push. And that's including traveling stuff, which is more than capable of doing that.

Leigh Cleary 43:04

And I really enjoy it. It's really nice meeting. I mean, I'm a bit of a petrol head at heart. So it's really nice meeting fellow petrolheads and seeing them fuse the attic about their cars. And while I'm going to go faster, you're like, Yeah, well watch out for the police, you know, you're gonna get yourself in trouble. And Ben is really, really cool. I really like it. Now it's got a real good balance on home more. So I think I mentioned earlier state used to stay away Monday through Friday, pretty much. And that was hard for me. I had a realization we bought the house I live in now actually, just after I'd had the stroke.

Leigh Cleary 43:36

And a friend of mine was in this hotel. This was right at the time. And I was thinking yeah, well, this job's not for me anymore. I was kind of already in that place. And there's gotta be more to life than just staying in a hotel, getting up in the morning, going to work going back to the hotel, you know, eat sleep, work, the peak, you know, that was kind of the life I was living.

Leigh Cleary 43:58

And, and he said to me, how's that lovely house of yours? And I said, You know

what, Andy, I have no idea. I'm never bloody there. You know, asked me about room 302. And I'll tell you all about it. I mean, every night but yeah, after that my house, I don't know. And I remember thinking that's that can't be right. You know, this is the home that we wanted as a family we all chose together and we're really happy to live in.

Leigh Cleary 44:19

But you know, I was never here. So actually getting made redundant or parting ways with that job. Everybody was hanging out. It's really bad. They should have done that. And that was okay. And I walked out with enough money to start this venture that I do now. And it's all worked out. Okay. And actually, I was really grateful for that moment when they were like, it's all over. You can just go home. You know, it was kind of a real big moment for me.

All Work And No Play



Bill Gasiamis 44:43

Sounds like it was a big relief. You know, the thing you just said about the house. That is one of the most profound things I've ever heard. Okay, so I'm going to repeat what I heard. So you were working to be able to afford to build a bigger, better, beautiful house. And because of the fact that you're working so much, you were never there. It was just this thing that was driving you to work, and work and work.

Leigh Cleary 45:12

Was here two days a week.

Bill Gasiamis 45:14

That's insane.

Leigh Cleary 45:17

It when you say it like that I've never really, I guess shared that with too many people. But it insane isn't it? You work your butt off to provide and don't get me wrong, we had everything. You know, we were financially really good and whatever my daughter or my wife wanted in terms of materialistic things they had, but I was never here.

Leigh Cleary 45:40

Saturday, Sunday I was here. But I felt like a way to make up for not being here all week by taking them out and doing stuff. So I was never actually just sat on my couch on a Saturday watching the football scores come in, or watching a movie with my daughter. I just never had that time to do that.

Bill Gasiamis 45:57

And I realized how insane it is only because I recognize myself in your story. And I know that there's a whole bunch of people listening going, What on earth are we doing? What the hell are we doing killing ourselves for something that's supposedly, you know, the goal is, you know, it's a materialistic thing but you'll look at that you suppose that they feel better by being in or you have a high status symbol or whatever.

Bill Gasiamis 46:28

But it's killing you to achieve it to get it, it's probably killing you. At least, that's my experience, it was almost killing me, I was working 16 17 18 hours a day sometimes. And those alien hours weren't all on the tools or anything like that. They were paperwork, they were quotes, they were all sorts of things that needed to be done for the business that I was running, which I'm still running.

Bill Gasiamis 46:54

And I was doing it all on my own thinking that that's surely the only way that business people run their businesses, they just work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And for me, I hated the entirety of it. Like I hated the whole thing of it. Now I'm doing it, and enjoying the challenges is still the same. But the but the part that I'm doing that takes more time, is now my passion project, the stroke recovery podcast, right?

Bill Gasiamis 47:21

So I am doing the same amount of hours. But more than half of my day is filled with doing this stuff, which I love. And which really makes my heart come alive. You know, and I don't hate it. And I don't, I'm not being I don't feel like I'm being forced to do it. And that's the difference. And I'm at home doing it because this is my garage. It's not, it's not a real studio.

Bill Gasiamis 47:50

So you know what I mean? Like, it's a very, it's the same amount of effort and energy, but it's so much more rewarding and well worth doing. And previously, I was supposedly making more money. But man, I wasn't benefiting from it at all.

Leigh Cleary 48:08

I had this conversation with my sister just this week. And then last week, she was getting in a bit of a pickle about not owning a house. So she's gone through a bit of a messy divorce and stuff. And she's currently kind of leasing an apartment. And I'm just kind of getting a knickers in a twist about it. Well, you know, the only person that gets rich off of you owning the house?

Leigh Cleary 48:31

It's your bank. It's not you. I said but we're conditioned to think that you've got to own a house, you've got to have your little plot of the world. And you must have your name on the deeds otherwise you're a failure certainly in England, that seems to be the thought process, right? You don't own your own house. You don't always get to have a look you've got a good life now you're happy your sons, well. Why would you be bothered about what the perspective of other people's opinion it's not really that important.

Bill Gasiamis 49:00

I've got a really tiny place. And it's three bedrooms. So it's big enough to fit our family when the kids are growing. And there is no space for a studio. So this is the garage. And there's a space for a courtyard and the courtyard is about 40 square meters. And no front yard. So it's like a little townhouse-type thing. It's very similar to what I see in a lot of the houses on TV in the UK.

Leigh Cleary 49:34

That is our house that is pretty much where we live, only goes up by a lot. So it's like three storeys and very kind of you'd expect to see it in a Harry Potter film,

you know, when they're going down all these little old London streets.

Bill Gasiamis 49:50

That's it. Mine's a modern version of one of those two stories. And then as a result of that, what that means is the amount of upkeep and time and effort that it takes get it clean, tidy. All that is no time it doesn't take any time at all. The grass to cut the grass does that doesn't exist, there's no such thing as getting out and cutting the lawn. There's, there's a beautiful, I have English box hedges, there's a beautiful garden that I've manicured over time. And the reason I chose those is because they're really slow, slow, slow growing, and you only need to trim two times a year.

Bill Gasiamis 50:27

And that's about it right. So I go through this process of trying to decrease the amount of things that I'm doing that I disliked doing. And cutting the grass was one of them. And, you know, maintaining all this other stuff was one of them. And I do all that stuff for a living anyway. So that's the kind of business I have, right? It's a property maintenance business.

Bill Gasiamis 50:48

So I hate doing my day work, I hate doing it at home on my leisure time. Yeah, so that's been able to be a really good thing for me, because as a result of that, now I don't have energy that I need to put into something that I'm not in that often anyway, so you can imagine maintaining a backyard.

Bill Gasiamis 51:14

Which I used to do in the past before the home that we're living in now, maintaining a backyard for us to never be in there. Unless we were in there probably once or twice a month, when people come around. And I'm spending that entire month maintaining it, making sure that everything's perfect, and the rest of it. And I can't afford a gardener, so to speak or anything like that.

Bill Gasiamis 51:34

So I just see it now as this, I see the properties and that kind of stuff as burdens rather than something that I have to get make bigger, have the newest, all that kind of stuff, I compare myself to the Joneses, and all that type of stuff. I mean, it's completely out of my head that I need to do that, all I need to do is have something that I can live in, that literally fits my butt and enables me to sleep in a

dry place and is warm.

Bill Gasiamis 52:07

That's It's all I need. I don't need anything more than that. And I can downsize so well, like I'd be able to be a really good downsizer. Whereas my wife's not at that stage, she hasn't been what I've been through from my perspective. And she's not really keen on the big house or any of that stuff. She's none of that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 52:29

But she hasn't thought about things, the way that I think about it, she wouldn't feel the need to downsize. But I reckon I could go from this house to a two-bedroom place without a problem, I can easily get rid of 90% of my rubbish that I've got stored around the joint other than my books, and just feel better about the fact that I've got to do less. And I've got to feel less. I've got to fill the other people's pockets less often.

Leigh Cleary 52:59

You know what you just said that that's, that's kind of struck a chord with me is you're talking about. She's not been through what you've been through, like your wife, and so she'll have a completely different perspective on life. So for the past two years, I've just understood after three years of hell, I guess to getting fit again, and getting back to the real world, I guess, where you start to be self-sufficient and just kind of rub yourself down and get on with it and not have people looking after your every whim and needed stuff, which actually was quite nice.

Leigh Cleary 53:38

But my perspective of life. For the past two years, I think I've now had to start explaining myself to my wife. This is why I say it like this. So she'll understand that I used to get really frustrated with her like, well, obviously, that's crazy to think like that she's like, but that's how we've always thought for the last 15 years or 20 years that we've been together.

Leigh Cleary 53:58

So why are you saying that why have you changed? I said I have changed, I guess. But I don't really recognize that change anymore. But I guess I have to almost go back looking at myself and say, Well, yeah, of course you've changed. Because I guess you'd be pretty arrogant to have that life-changing event and not let it

change you. You almost got to embrace that change and let it happen. I guess.

The Opportunity To Learn And Grow

Bill Gasiamis 54:23

I don't think the word arrogant you'd have to be stupid to go through what you're been through, and then insist on remain the same as you were, you're going backwards, you're not moving forward. It's an opportunity for you to learn and grow from. It's an opportunity for you to see things from a different perspective which we don't get to do right.

Bill Gasiamis 54:45

When you had to be in a wheelchair for a small amount of time like I did. Man, I get to see the perspective of these people that have to be in wheelchairs all the time. Because I was almost one of them and I never knew at the beginning whether I would not be that guy I took it on the chin.

Bill Gasiamis 55:01

And I just thought, whatever comes. If that means I've got to deal with different levels of depression and anxiety and all that kind of stuff, well, I'm not going to worry about it right now I'll deal with them when they come. But I'm so grateful that I got to experience what it's like to be in a wheelchair to need to go to the toilet, from a wheelchair, and to have nobody next to me to help me.

Bill Gasiamis 55:22

I can't feel my left side, and I've got to drag myself to a toilet, because I'm going to crap my pants. And there's nobody around to help me even though I was in a hospital. And they were all busy. So when somebody has a wheelchair, and bumps into me in a crowded place, instead of being the idiot that I was beforehand, who would have thought, what mate? Can't you see me?

Bill Gasiamis 55:46

Now I'm like, Well, maybe the guy is just trying to get through in a way that's different to the way that I'm going to get through. And I don't need to be so precious about the fact that I was bumped into by a person in a wheelchair. And you know, what it also helped me do, it helped me go help me do this.

Bill Gasiamis 56:06

I do not know what, regardless of whether this somebody is in a wheelchair or

not, I do not know what the other person across from me has just been through or is constantly going through. And therefore I need to be better at being gentler to them and more understanding to them and more empathetic to them before I even knew anything about them.

Leigh Cleary 56:34

One of my closest friends paid me a really nice compliment. And a while back, and I kind of chucked it back at him If I'm honest so we sat on the side of this lovely bar in town. I do other things other than drink, by the way. But it's something I'm really good. And I really enjoy. So this homeless chap come up to us and asked us for some change.

Leigh Cleary 56:55

And I said, Yeah, of course you can. So I've got some change. And my friend said you always give money to homeless people now. I said, What do you mean, he said well before, when we used to know each other. So we kind of reconnected after I had a stroke, he found out that I'd been really poorly.

Leigh Cleary 57:09

I think it was right when my life was in a balance. I think a friend of mine kind of a mutual friend said, you know, Leigh's, like really bad, he's really bad here. And, you know, might not actually pull through this. He said, I need to get back in contact with him. And we haven't kind of kicked off where we left off all those years ago.

Leigh Cleary 57:28

And we're in this bar and he said. I've really noticed that about you. You said you do anything to help anybody now? And I said, well, not anybody, not everybody I said, but I do think I said, you see that guy a homeless guy as a pest, I how did he get to that stage, no one's going to choose that life, right? Like, let's say been a wheelchair, no one would say, that's what I want to do, I want that I want to not be able to walk, no one's gonna choose to be homeless and be out on the street.

Leigh Cleary 57:57

So if I don't know, a couple of pounds out of my pocket, that's, fairly irrelevant, and that money buys them a coffee or helps them get through the night, then. So be it, I'm happy to do that. And I think you do go through that. And like, say, you'd have to be stupid, to go through what you've been through, I've been through and

not change your perspective, a little, if not a lot, I don't think I've changed it that much.

Leigh Cleary 58:22

Some people around me will say you've changed loads. I think I've always been a bit. I've been very empathetic. And people are just maybe not showing it as well as I do now. And maybe not as gentle as I am now will be will be quite hard. So if somebody was homeless, I wouldn't be that person go, Well, you got yourself like that you get yourself out of it, you know, whereas now it's like, it's just not that simple life, just not that simple.

Leigh Cleary 58:44

It's not that simple to think that you're in a wheelchair, like, you know, that's not because you're lazy. It's not because it's your fault. You're in a wheelchair, Something bad must have happened to you at birth. Before, since you know, whatever, it's just not as straightforward. And I think that's it has taught me I think I used to see life for a very straightforward lens. And now I'm kind of a lot more understanding to other people go through.

Bill Gasiamis 59:10

The thing about homeless people that you mentioned on the same. And I don't share it with anybody. Nobody knows that I do this because it's not something you need to share. But I reckon there's people like you and me, who are listening to this podcast episode who do the same thing that you do now and that I do now. And that's why I'm mentioning it because if they are, I'd love to hear from them.

Bill Gasiamis 59:34

And now it's like homeless people and I like we have this unspoken language that as soon as they see me, they feel like they can ask me for a few bucks. And I'm like, oh, yeah, of course, no worries. And I always go into the central business district with some coins in my pockets on purpose, and so that I can hand them out to whoever asks and even if they don't ask.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:00

There's plenty of homeless people around that are asking, you could just leave a few coins in their hat or whatever. They've got their container. So I, my wife said the same thing to me years ago, she said, Well, you're always giving money to homeless people now, just as an observation, and I said, Yeah, because I just

could have been one, I know that my family technically wouldn't have let me be in that situation, they probably would have pulled out all stops to avoid me from getting into that situation.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:29

But I just as easily could have been one of those people, because the mental health issues that come with stroke can be life-changing, and life-altering for people to the extent where they don't recognize themselves, and they don't know how to go about regular life anymore. And they default to things and make decisions that end up going badly, that can actually put them in that situation where they end up living, homeless.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:56

So I don't see that they are different from me, I see those people as the same as me. And not only those people, anybody I see, everybody is the same as me now. So identify and share myself, I'm not higher than them, I'm not lower than them, I'm not equal to them. They're just humans, they're having a human experience, whatever their version of it is, and I used to do the whole I'm never gonna give people money, because they're probably going to go buy alcohol or drugs with it, or something like that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:27

And it's such a bullshit thing to say about people. How judgmental are you that you think you've decided that that's what they're gonna go do with it? And even if they do, who cares? Like, if that's what they need to get through the day? And if that's what they need to not try and get money from somebody else in a negative way, or rob somebody or whatever. I think that's fine.

Leigh Cleary 1:01:50

Or kill themselves, if that's what they need, I think, I'll happily buy someone a beer or whatever, if it's going to stop them chuck themselves off a bridge or whatever. Because you know, these people are not going to be in a great place mentally, are they?

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:04

No. And while they're still alive, there's still hope for change and recovery and overcoming. And I'll never forget, the thing that cemented it for me was we've got this really famous pub in Melbourne. It's across the road from our main station,

the Flinders Street Station. It's called the Yellin Jacksons. And there was a lady sitting there and she was asking for some food, some for some money.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:27

And I just squat down and sat next to her for a little bit. And we were having a chat, and she was telling me, she came from another state. And while she was here, things didn't go the way she planned. And literally, within a couple of months, she had no money and she was homeless. And the person that she had come with had left her or whatever, and they separated.

Helping Others In Need

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:48

And she was trying to get enough money to get some sleep to get a place to sleep that evening. So I think they have to pay a small amount. But then the only way to get that money is to ask. So I said to her, so what do you need right now? She said, it'd be good if you could go get me a feed. The local McDonald's was down the road. What did you like? She said, Give me some McDonald's.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:09

She told me what to get her. I went and got her the meal, I think it was six or seven bucks. And then brought it back to her. We had another chat. And after about 10 or 15 minutes, I let her eat and I left. And then it was literally no more than six months later. I'm just flicking through the channels on TV. And I see this face that I recognize.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:30

And I'm just trying to work out who this person is, why do I recognize her. And she had just landed permanent state-based accommodation that she was able to live in. And she was talking to the reporter that was interviewing her about how it's going to change her life, how it's going to make her feel safe, how it's going to impact the rest of her life, the fact that she had just somehow landed this government run accommodation.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:01

And for me, that was it. That was the absolute kicker not that I needed one anymore. But that was the kicker. It proved to me that people are just looking for a way to make the situation better. When they ask you for money. They're not

actually doing anything else. They're just trying to make their situation better. dollar by dollar, pound by pounds, whatever it is, and they just need help.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:30

So I don't think there's anything better than just speaking to random people who look like they need help. Even if they're not asking for money, even if they're just sitting lonely on a chair, or on a train or in a bus. I think there's nothing better than just reaching out to somebody and saying good day.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:57

That's the part that I've taken from all of this amongst other things, like, I was never the guy, I was never the guy that did that something so dramatic had to happen to me for me to appreciate the difficulties that other people might be going through and I'm bloody thankful for the lesson, let me tell you, I was such an idiot such a thick head before that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:16

And not through any kind it was from being ignorant, that's all it was just from being ignorant, not from malice, or me trying to be mad, or anything like that. It's just from being ignorant and having lived an ideal life for 37 years, which I'm totally grateful for. But now that my life's had this massive speed bump, I'm also totally grateful for I wouldn't change it.

Leigh Cleary 1:05:49

I was trying to explain this to my daughter, we were talking about coming on this podcast today. And I said, you can sit and listen if you'd like. She said, I'll take the mickey out of you. So I went gone up to bed. So that's what you're gonna say. So we'll see what Arthur said. But I think, you know, hopefully, it'll be quite natural conversation, which it has, by the way, I'm just gonna read natural set of ads you feel about stroking that? So I'm kind of glad it happened.

Leigh Cleary 1:06:21

So that, you know, I would want to go through it again no, would I wish it on somebody else? Absolutely not. But I feel like a better more rounded person for the fact that this happened. And I think my life decisions now are better informed as a result of it happening. So I'm totally down what you're saying, you know, grateful for those life lessons that has given you because without them, you know, you'd be a dancer, you weren't a complete ignoramus. But still being that person

that was, you know, a little bit ignorant to other people's needs and challenges. I definitely was,

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:55

I really would, because I wasn't indicating a change in lifestyle or behavior in any way, shape, or form. Before that wasn't indicating it at all. I mean, I got really stuck into personal development, and try to find some amazing courses that are going to shift my perspective and allow me to deal with all of the trauma, the trauma that I'd been through.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:17

And that my family had been through, and then the new way that we were going about life, like I really had to gain the skills to be able to just deal with it. If I didn't gain those skills, it would have been a much worse outcome for me, mentally, I don't think I would have made it mentally.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:33

So what what I, what I wished, not even wished, but the way I reflect on it is wouldn't it have been great to learn what we've learned, without going through something so challenging and difficult. Give me the lessons can be the growth and the lessons part of the suffering, but I don't think they come separately. I think they come hand in hand.

Leigh Cleary 1:08:00

I think you're right. You kind of have to go through that to truly understand it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:04

Yeah, you do. And when somebody hasn't gone through that they won't truly understand. And then deeply knowing that about them. That makes me feel okay, as well that they don't understand the person on the other side of the chair doesn't understand. And I'm like, I'm kind of glad you don't understand and it's less frustrating.

Leigh Cleary 1:08:27

It took me a while to get to that stage, I think to realize that not everybody would understand or see the world through a similar lens. But I think once you get it you kind of like, you know, I'm glad you didn't say like that, because the reason I do is because I went through this horrendous thing that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemies, let alone a loved one. So yeah, I totally get that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:46

Yeah. And then isn't it cool that while the people around you don't understand there's a whole bunch of us around the world that do understand.

Leigh Cleary 1:08:59

Yeah. I'd like to think that there's people around me that as a result of me, I mean, they all went through it as well. Right? You know, I think you could sit here with my brother and my sister, my best friend, my wife, my daughter, and have it equally good an informed conversation about the impact of a stroke, because they saw it, it's how accurately with a tie what happened to them as well in the shape that he held, it was for them to live live that life. So I think it's, you know, they may have changed as a result in the main for the good.

Leigh Cleary 1:09:30

I would say, Let's make them a little bit more empathetic. You know, I know. You know, certainly my brother and sister, you know, sort of, they'll talk in court, you know, when you go and see your big brother who you think is immortal. Yeah, the big bully of the family in hospital looking like, this could be the last day on the planet. It's a it's a rude awakening, you know, so I think, yeah, I think it affects everybody around you.

Leigh Cleary 1:09:53

If you're lucky enough to have people around you. I saw people in hospital that definitely aren't you sort of see everything? Every day on the now as soon as it was kind of visiting time in hospital? I had people that were on my bed. Weather that's my wife, my daughter, mother and father-in-law and my stepdad, you know, we aren't using all friends and all sorts.

Leigh Cleary 1:10:16

But equally, I saw people in hospital. Days go by no visitors. You just think that's? Yeah, that's really sad, you know, really sad. Yeah. So I think if you're lucky enough to have those people around you, they'll change as a result of it. And I think that's something to definitely not forget, if you're unfortunate enough to be in that position where you've had that happen to the people around you will change as well. It's going to change, it's gonna change them too.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:41

Yeah, absolutely. It does change people. I know a lot of people. Some people

didn't know what to do, how to behave, what to say all of that stuff. Some people didn't come, some people that I didn't expect to come to end up and we're way, way more empathetic than I ever expected them to be. And if you're somebody listening, who's perhaps in a situation where people aren't, where you don't have a lot of people around, you reach out to other stroke survivors, they'll get you this a whole world of people on Instagram, Facebook, social media is really good for that. Perhaps not in your local community.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:21

But there are heaps of people that are willing to share. For example, Leigh and I, we do not know each other from a bar of sort yet, here we are. We're on a podcast, we're chatting about stuff. I feel like I've known him forever. And we have a kinship. There's something that we share that you can't really explain or describe. But here we are. interacting, and it's that easy. That's how easy it is to find amazing people to interact with. Just be a bit braver.

Leigh Cleary 1:11:50

I really admire I see a lot of people really kind of document their recovery. I could never do that. Yeah, in fact, I've seen footage of me they did some filming of me when I was learning to, to walk again. And I saw it when I was volunteering. And I literally had to leave the rooms I could feel myself going because I just looked so weak. And so poorly. I was like, This is why now I see why my best bud turned up in hospital and turned out to just burst into tears my brother the same neck.

Leigh Cleary 1:12:23

Now I know what it work as I've just looked like a shadow off myself. So I really admire people that do document it, though. And, I always comment messages of support and stuff. I just think that's one it's really brave, you know, really brave. And I think there's the pessimist side of me Bill, you know, look at me, I've done this today. And I think it's really good. And it's really good motivation, hopefully for the people out there that are struggling. And you see people doing things and stuff like that.

Celebrate The Small Wins

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:52

It does motivate other people. And it also is really good to celebrate your wins and go back and reflect on how far you've come. Because a lot of people forget to do

that. And sometimes, even I did you get stuck in the whole oh my gosh, you know, it's been 12 months, I still can't talk properly or remember or, whereas my counselor used to say to me, oh, my gosh, look how far you've come.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:18

You weren't speaking like this six months ago, or five months ago or whatever. And she had, she had to do the reminding for me. So I didn't have the sense to do a personal journal or any of that thing, or document myself in any way. But the people that are doing it, I think it's such an amazing thing. Because what it also shows is the progression of the recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:41

So you get to see that person in hospital, they're a goner. And then you get to see them get better and better and better. And then if you've been following them for long enough, and they're two or three years down the track, you get to really experience the growth and the stages. And that's such a good thing.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:58

That is exactly what we need to demonstrate and what I needed, I needed to see people that are been through what I'd been through many years earlier, and had come out the other side. And I got that instantly with a mate of mine now a guy who's a mate of my mouth, who had been through a dissection of his one of his carotid arteries. He had also passed out through a through heart failure at the same time.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:24

And then they stitched him up and picked him up. And when I got to him, he was about 10 years beyond that. So it happened to him in his early 20s. And in his late 20s And he was 10 years beyond that. And I was going into surgery a week later.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:40

And I said to him, Andrew, I just need to know that it's possible to get better, you know, because I've got this surgery coming up, they're gonna open my head up and they're gonna take this faulty blood vessel out. And I don't know what what I'm going to be like after that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:54

And just him being there and telling me his story and then being able to see him I just felt like, Okay, well, this is doable we could certainly do something. So that's

what I love about people who actually document it. They think they're doing it for themselves, like there's a bit of that. But they're doing so much more for other people. It's just same as this podcast. It's just amazing.

Leigh Cleary 1:15:21

Totally agree.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:22

So what's the future hold? Tell me a little bit about what you're thinking about the next few years.

Leigh Cleary 1:15:29

So the next two years will be so I live in the middle of England. So if you look at England as a map, I live literally, we couldn't be further away from water. Like literally where we live is the furthest party away from water. Unless it rains, which it does a lot. So moving back down to the south coast, which is where both me and my wife are from, we're going to wait till my daughter finish their studies and goes off to university.

Leigh Cleary 1:15:56

To do that, let her kind of finish her hastened to call her child because she is 16 years old and clearly knows everything. Once she's finished, Sixth Form education will move back to the south of a country, she'll probably head off to university yourself. So my business at the minute I predominantly base myself on the south of the country to build the business there so that when we move back, I feel the benefit of not having to travel to.

Leigh Cleary 1:16:21

So that's pretty exciting. We're going to move him back down to our hometown, we'll be really excited to get back down there. He has been 13 years since we've lived there. So it's been a long time we moved up here for what was going to be a year. And that was 13 years ago. And here I am talking to you now. But in two years time, you know, we will eventually get back there.

Leigh Cleary 1:16:40

But yeah, so that's what the next two years holds. Hopefully, the business will hold out and keep doing well. I think, you know, I don't know what it's like in Australia. But they're saying that in England in 2030, there will be no petrol diesel cars, it'll be all electric cars. I think it's the biggest scam in the world. By

the way. This is this is all to, you know, obviously to save the environment.

Leigh Cleary 1:17:06

But I'm also acutely aware of how long these batteries last and cars and stuff. So I'm not sure that's going to happen. But if it does, that'll have a detrimental effect on my business. Because essentially, you know, I make petrol heads go faster, not electric heads, because there's not such a thing yet.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:25

I don't think it's going to end in 2030 no chance it's going to end. And it's too soon, because you can't just switch off something that has been going for 100. And so years in 10, you just can't switch it off. There's too much reliance on it.

Leigh Cleary 1:17:41

The infrastructure straightaway that you would need to go to that is it's not even close to being met like Oh, there's more electric points now. There was more, if everybody had a car, what would the queue be? Like, one electric point that's gonna get to him?

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:58

Yeah, that's just the thing that I say I love things that are about protecting us from, you know, from ourselves, you know, planetary protection, all that kind of stuff, you know, it's our home, we need to protect it, I get it all. But the rhetoric around that is a little bit ridiculous, in my opinion.

Bill Gasiamis 1:18:18

As if the people who are putting all this stuff together, don't know that it's not going to be done in 10 years time. The politicians are the ones I think that muddy the waters with regards to conversations because the what they need to do is win power, they need to get back into power. So they talk the talk to get into power. But we have a train line.

Bill Gasiamis 1:18:41

We have a train line that they've been talking about for 40 years that needs to go from the Tullamarine airport, which is the airport main airport in Melbourne, to the central business district, which is about a 50 kilometer stretch. They've been talking about a train line for 40 years and it's still not in this is one of the most livable cities in the world. There's 6 million people in here. And they cannot get a train line in from one part of the the town to the other part of the town. And

they're telling us they're going to switch off all this stuff in 10 years. I don't think so.

Leigh Cleary 1:19:11

I'm a massive skeptic of it. You know, certainly in England is one votes over the past few years because you know, we do need to like say save us from ourselves because that is clearly what is ruining the planet is humans that ruin it not animals. There's no chance.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:38

And not only that, there is a need for fossil fuel use because they go into the benefactor of everything else. It may stop the polluting of the atmosphere to the extent the air that we breathe, etc, and change the chemical composition of our environment and that's all cool but you're might be out of business because all those cars, or those classic cars that exist, will still need to exist, people will still be driving them. They may have different rules around how they are driven and where you can fill them and where you can fill them up and all that type of thing. But that still exist. I think you're good for another 40 or 50 years.

Leigh Cleary 1:20:24

To be honest, another 15 And I'm good. Another 15 I'll be quite happy to one I'm going to move into when we moved to the coast. I'm gonna move into doing boats as well. So that will get will be the next thing because they do use a lot of fuel boats.

Bill Gasiamis 1:20:43

Yeah, but there you go. I think it'd be fine for now. And I hope they work it out. And they do save us from ourselves and they make the planet healthier. There's no doubt about that. I really hope they do that. And I'm behind that every step of the way, please find the solutions but politicians, you know, they just say stuff that is going to get voted that they think is popular.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:07

If something that wasn't popular in the majority of the people changed overnight, the politician would change overnight, they would change their story and their rhetoric overnight. So I really appreciate you reaching out and connecting thank you so much for being here. Thank you for sharing. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors and feel free to reach out anytime.

Leigh Cleary 1:21:36

And you to Bill.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:38

Thank you for joining me on today's episode. I hope you'll like the show. To learn more about my guests including their links and to follow them and download a full transcript of the entire interview. Please go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:54

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Bill Gasiamis 1:22:11

Sharing this show with family and friends on social media will make it possible for people who may need this type of content to find it easier and that may make a massive difference to someone that is on the road to recovery after their own experience with stroke. Thanks again for being here and listening. I really appreciate you see you on the next episode.

Intro 1:22:31

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Intro 1:22:48

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Intro 1:23:11

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Intro 1:23:25

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Intro 1:23:39

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Intro 1:23:55

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