

How John Wagner Overcame 3 Strokes and Rediscovered Life

Recovery from small stroke: John Wagner's story of surviving 3 strokes, 2 Brain surgeries, and reclaiming his life will inspire your journey.

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Transcript:

Recovery From Small Stroke: Introduction and Acknowledgements

Bill Gasiamis 0:00

Welcome everyone before we dive into today's extraordinary conversation, I want to take a moment to thank you for being part of this incredible community. Your support, whether it's through sharing the podcast, leaving reviews or simply tuning in each week, makes such a massive difference. Together, we're creating a space for stroke survivors, caregivers and allies, to feel seen, heard and inspired.

Bill Gasiamis 0:29

Also in the most recent episodes, you may have heard me mentioned that since

2015 I've been personally covering all the costs of producing the Recovery After Stroke podcast to ensure stroke survivors, caregivers and their loved ones have access to free, valuable resources. Late last year, I decided to ask for help from those who feel they've received tremendous value from the podcast by supporting it on the Patreon page that can be found at www.patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07

I want to take a moment to express my half hour gratitude to everyone who has supported me in some way or another. Your encouragement, it truly keeps me going. A special thank you to my most recent Patreon supporters, Sean, Elizabeth, Brian and Heather, your generosity means the world to me and helps me ensure that I can continue creating episodes to support stroke survivors everywhere. I also would like to address a comment John today's excellent guest made it near the end of the interview about his initial response to hearing or seeing ads in my episodes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:46

And how he changed his thinking about ads after he realized the high value he was receiving from the interviews he was listening to. Simply put, these ads are essential to help offset some of the podcasts costs. If you're unable to support the podcast in any other way, simply listening to the ads without skipping them goes a long way in keeping this project alive. I'm so grateful for everyone who listens, supports and engages with the podcast in any capacity.

Bill Gasiamis 2:18

It means everything to me and helps me stay committed to creating episodes for the community on my way to 1000 episodes and beyond. Thank you. As always, I hope you'll also allow me the small indulgence of reminding you about my book *The Unexpected Way The Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened*. It's been a resource for many stroke survivors and their loved ones offering practical guidance and hope during challenging times.

John Wagner's Introduction and Initial Small Stroke Experience

Bill Gasiamis 2:46

If you haven't already, you can grab your copy on amazon.com by searching my

name, Bill Gasiamis, or by going to recoveryafterstroke.com/book. Now, I'm thrilled to introduce today's guest, John Wagner. John's story is one of resilience, determination and learning to embrace life after incredible challenges, having survived three ischemic strokes, undergone two brain surgeries and a double bypass, John's journey is nothing short of inspiring.

Bill Gasiamis 3:19

He shares his insights into recovery, the importance of perseverance, and how he's finding strength to live fully after such a life altering experience. Let's jump in all right. John Wagner, welcome to the podcast.

John Wagner 3:34

Thank you. Bill Gasiamis, nice to be here. Thank you, sir.

Bill Gasiamis 3:38

Tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

John Wagner 3:41

Well, in 2022 which was two and a half years ago, June. I was on my way to work here in suburban Chicago, getting ready to take a business trip to Mexico, of all places. But while I was at work getting ready to leave for the airport, I was going over some data, engineering data with a co worker. One of my other co workers called me on my phone in the office and said 'Hey, John, can you see me before you leave? I said 'Okay. So I finished up, went into his office, and we greeted each other. How you doing, Kev? Good. How you feeling? I said 'I feel fine, why?

John Wagner 4:24

He said 'You found like you've had about 10 cocktails, drinks. I said 'Really? He said 'Yeah, and your mouth drooping a little bit over here, and I think you're, you're drooling. And I didn't know what to think. I didn't know anything about a stroke, I didn't know what a stroke was. I didn't never knew anybody that had a stroke, totally ignorant when it came to the subject. So but his uncle had had a stroke six months before a severe stroke. He knew the symptoms. He said 'John, I think you're having a stroke. So we did a couple. A test with arms, my head bad, arm drift.

John Wagner 5:04

And he said 'I wanted you to smile, and it was a little bit off. Wasn't too bad, but he said 'I think you're having a stroke. I called an ambulance, and I was shocked.

I said 'Kev, I gotta go to the airport. I didn't fight him on it, but he said 'I think you're having a stroke. None of these symptoms that I hear about last night I spoke at the hospital, which I do every two weeks, to stroke survivors, and we went over some of the symptoms, banging and all these painful things, I didn't have that. So, these two EMTs showed up. They did a couple tests.

John Wagner 5:45

They said 'Yeah, think you're having a stroke Mr. Wagner. I still didn't understand the severity of it. They got me into an ambulance and raced me up to a hospital just on the edge of Chicago, here, fabulous hospital, and I got admitted, and they said 'We're not sure if you're having a TIA or a full blown stroke. And I didn't know what either one was, but they admitted me. They did CAT scan right away. They got me stabilized, and they said 'Yeah, you're having a stroke. So I was admitted to the hospital.

John Wagner 6:23

The very next day in the hospital, I was speaking to a nurse practitioner who had been a treating people for strokes for 40 years, really newer stuff. We were sitting there talking, and she said 'Are you feeling okay today? And I said 'Yeah, I feel fine. Considering, she said 'I gave you some medicine a couple minutes ago, a glass, and you just dropped it. You didn't even know it. And I looked at her, I said 'Really? She said 'Yeah, I think you might be having another stroke. Sure enough, I had a second stroke in the hospital 12 hours after the first one.

John Wagner 7:02

But I will go back to this is an important point that I was stressing last night as I spoke, and that is the amount of time that it took for them to analyze that I had a stroke, get me up to the hospital, get me stabilized, and use the medicine they were able to get rid of that clot that had agglomerated. You're familiar with the anterior artery, two carotid arteries.

John Wagner 7:32

And where the carotid arteries end are two arteries that go to your front lobes of your brain, called the anterior artery and the middle artery, and they bring oxygenated blood to the front lobes of your brain, and that was blocked, and that's where my that's where the clot was. It was an ischemic stroke that I had.

Bill Gasiamis 7:56

So do they know the underlying cause of those clots?

Causes and Diagnosis of Small Strokes

John Wagner 8:01

Funny, you said that. I asked the nurse the second day, I said 'Another stroke? And she said 'Yeah. I said, what can cause that? And she said 'Oh, hot dogs drinking latent behavior. And I kind of raised my hand. I said 'Well, I hate to say this, but I do check some of those boxes. But you know the when she showed me an x ray, she said 'This is the clot, there's the artery. And over years, it just slowly collapsed. She said, that happens. Yours didn't happen in one day.

John Wagner 8:43

Although I have type two diabetes and my blood pressure was high, not through the roof, but I never thought about that either. I never paid attention. I have high blood pressure, so what? I'm fine. I just went out and ran three miles. I'm okay .

Bill Gasiamis 8:58

But you know, with your type two diabetes. Did a doctor ever say to you that puts you at higher risk of stroke?

John Wagner 9:06

Yes. Clinic, when they diagnosed that, I was up there for something else, and they said, pretty sure you have type two diabetes. It was like speaking Russian. What are you talking about? I don't know what it is. Can you be a little bit more descriptive. And he said 'Well, your high blood pressure can sometimes cause a stroke. It's like an old pipe that's got a lot of calcium in it, eventually it breaks through.

Bill Gasiamis 9:33

It also had high blood pressure.

John Wagner 9:34

Yes, it was, I think it was about 140 over 75 or it was not through the roof, but it certainly wasn't what it is today.

Bill Gasiamis 9:45

So, tell me about that. Let's go back about the diabetes. How long have you known that you've had diabetes?

Bill Gasiamis 9:53

Okay, let's take a quick pause to reflect on John's incredible journey so far. Story. Is like, here's a why I started this podcast to connect, inspire and provide hope to stroke survivors and their families. If this podcast has been a source of value for you, I'd love your support on Patreon. By becoming a patreon at patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke, you'll not only help keep this podcast going, but also join a community of people dedicated to recovery and growth. Now let's get back to John and hear more about how he's not just surviving, but thriving after his strokes and surgeries.

John Wagner 10:35

How long have I known? I've been treated for for the last year and a half, and I'm doing real well. I've got it under control, and changed my diet, lost weight, my A1C, my blood sugar is down dramatically. So once all this happened, I just made up my mind to do something about it. But wasn't sure what the heck was happening.

Bill Gasiamis 11:00

Is it medication dependent your type two diabetes? Do you need medications keep your blood?

John Wagner 11:06

Yes, I'm taking three medications, which is not as many as some of the people I've talked to, but basically to control blood sugar and control blood pressure, although I've brought that down just by exercising, which is probably the best way.

Bill Gasiamis 11:24

And how old are you, John?

John Wagner 11:25

I'm going to be 73 in a month. So I had the stroke when I was 70.

Bill Gasiamis 11:33

And before that, would you say that your health was pretty good?

John Wagner 11:37

It was decent. I used to run cross country in high school and college. I was an athlete. I was used to running through pain and putting my body through hard

work, which helped me. Actually, I'll tell you about that later, but I just wasn't in great shape. I let things go over the years, I could have been in much better shape. I didn't drink a lot, didn't smoke. And then it dawned on me, it can happen to anybody, anytime.

John Wagner 12:06

So I think it caught, kind of caught up with me, though that was one of the things I went through, Bill, I got so angry at myself. You go through this and you're angry at somebody, but you have to be mad at yourself, because nobody else got me here except me.

Bill Gasiamis 12:22

What kind of work do you do?

John Wagner 12:24

I'm a technical engineer for a manufacturing company. We work with automotive companies using high-precision machining. So I basically work with engineers in manufacturing plants like General Motors, big car companies around the world, and it's an engineering type capacity, so I have to be sharp.

Bill Gasiamis 12:49

I've never done this before in a podcast. Like, I'm going to go after you a little bit here. I want to understand, like, what's behind your condition at the age of 73 right? So you're an engineer, you're a smart guy. There's no doubt about that. You know you need to know certain things. You have that capacity to make your brain, you know, solve problems and work things out.

Bill Gasiamis 13:10

What is it about the human condition, or your body, or, you know, the way that you saw yourself that let you get to that stage where you had contributed to being physically unwell, and then in high and then you got mad at yourself. Was that mad? Or was that I'm going to take responsibility now? And if it was, I'm going to take responsibility. Why wasn't that at the top of your mind beforehand?

John Wagner 13:44

To be honest, it's because I was ignorant. I didn't know what I didn't know, and I didn't want to know what I didn't know. I just don't have to, I had no idea a stroke was a brain attack. I didn't know about thrombosis. I didn't know about any of these things that I now know a lot of because I listen to presentations every two

weeks before I speak to stroke survivors, and it's very cathartic, but it's also very it's an eye opener all these things and a lot of this information I've listened to your podcasts are great.

Medical Procedures and Small Strokes Recovery

John Wagner 14:20

A lot of the information was not available. 2025 years ago, they told me that in the hospital, he said 'You know, I had three strokes, so then anyway, I'll go back real quick. After the second stroke, I was in the hospital for about a week. Week and a half I was released, and they said 'Look, I was really scared. I said 'Am I a walking time bomb? I've had two strokes. What about the third, the fourth? And they said 'Well, it's good question, because we've addressed the symptoms, but unless you address the problem, you may have another stroke, and it may be the big one.

John Wagner 15:01

And I thought 'Oh, boy, so what do I do? They said 'Well, we have a procedure called an intracranial angioplasty. And of course, I'm thinking angioplasty in the heart, the big balloon. I said 'Oh, I know what that is. That's a piece of cake. She said 'No, not, not yours, yours is a little fine wire. We're going to go through your groin, up into your brain. That's why I said 'Whoa, when Aren't there a lot of right and left hand turns from my groin to my brain? She said 'Yeah, as a matter of fact, there are. But this is a very good procedure. We do it all the time.

John Wagner 15:38

It's got high success once you talk it over with your wife and find out if you want to do it? Because then my brain was doing flips. Bill, I could picture myself in a corner for the rest of my life. I didn't know. We talked about met with the surgeon. He showed us what the procedure was all about and the percentages for complete recovery. So I agreed to it. So a week later, I went back to the same hospital on the surgeon ended up doing the procedure where they actually put a very small stent in my artery, in my brain to keep it from collapsing anymore.

John Wagner 16:17

Well, the procedure went well. It was a regular surgery. And he said 'No, it went good. We like what we see, you've come through the anesthesia. Everything looks good, I think you're going to be all right. And well, that made me feel much better. So they said we're going to release you, but quite frankly, we'd like you to

take this blood thinner called Plavix. And again, I was totally clueless, and Glenn, my wife, was with me, because nothing was making sense after the stroke, my brain was all over. So I said 'Okay. So he said 'We've called in the pharmacy, your Medicine is waiting for you pick it up.

John Wagner 16:58

So we did on the way home. I got the medicine, I brought it here, I took it one night, I took it the next night, I took it a third night, but the fourth night we went out to dinner or something. I don't remember, I didn't take it that night, I had a full blown stroke, in at four in the morning. It's just completely all the blood platelets agglomerated to the stent because I didn't take that one night, and I was kind of mad about that. I said 'You know, couldn't somebody have told me it's really damn important that you don't miss your medicine.

John Wagner 17:36

Although they did tell me to take it, but I won't do that again. So had a third stroke that I was rushed to the hospital close by here. They said 'Look, we know what the problem is, we've called your surgeon to put the stent in. He's going to meet us at another stroke facility near Chicago in an hour. And sure enough, I raced over there the ambulance, and he performed what's called a thrombectomy, where they actually go into the same route, up into your brain, but they remove the clot, that is agglomerated onto the stent. And it went real well.

John Wagner 18:15

He said 'Looks, you look good, I'm pretty happy. I said 'Okay, so that was like three strokes and two brain surgeries. And I thought it was crazy. It was hard to grasp.

Bill Gasiamis 18:28

It's hard then talk to you here and have you be so with it and no, very few deficits, very few, you know, tell me about what it left. It's left you with because physically you're looking great mate, and that's a good thing. That's such a good thing, very people come out of it.

John Wagner 18:54

That's why, I want to get older and talk to you. That's why I speak with survivors. I said 'Look, this could have been so much worse for me. I couldn't walk for six weeks. I was admitted into that rehab hospital after they did the thrombectomy,

he said 'Look, we're going to admit to this hospital and we're going to do therapy, because I could not move my legs. I was a mess, and I was used to running and and I couldn't move my legs at all. So I was in there for about a good two, three weeks. I can't tell the amount of times I fell down.

John Wagner 19:28

I had a walker. I'd walk a couple steps, wham, fall down, I get up. I'd do it again and get up again. And now it was getting personal, I was really getting angry at myself for putting myself in this position, and my wife and I know you've talked about this, but you and your wife went through and all those runs you made to the hospitals, not knowing if you had a stroke.

John Wagner 19:52

We left there, they did such a great job solving the problem, but we were clueless on what to do when we left. When we got home, what do we do? My wife was scared to death. I don't know what to do, how do I care for a stroke patient, especially one that said three and can't walk.

Bill Gasiamis 20:11

She's not a nurse, she's had no training in stroke especially.

John Wagner 20:18

And you've been a great connection for me, because I'm listening, I was listening to one the other day with Nicholas Schmidlkofer.

Bill Gasiamis 20:26

Yeah, he's great.

John Wagner 20:26

He's terrific. And he's probably nearby, probably not too far from me. But some of that information I started because of you. I started doing things like taping, and I'm thinking, I don't sleep with my mouth open. I never have a sore throat. I don't need to do that. And I thought, I'll give it a try. So I've been doing it for the last couple weeks.

John Wagner 20:50

My sleep, which was never really bad, Bill, it's wonderful. It's relaxing. I'll be laying in bed and I'll open my eyes and my breathing is very easy and effortless, and it does help. So little things like that your podcast mean a lot, I guarantee

you.

Bill Gasiamis 21:08

Thank you.

John Wagner 21:09

I used to listen to music when I'd walk around. Now I listen to the podcast, and the amount of information in there is tremendous.

Bill Gasiamis 21:17

So that's good. So then you had to learn how to walk again.

John Wagner 21:24

I had in that rehab hospital once, and after about two and a half three weeks, I was able to walk with a walker, which in my mind, was okay, this is good enough. At least I can walk, and then they finally released me and said 'We recommend that you go across the street to our outpatient rehab facility. And they explained to me, you'll be doing physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy. And I said 'Okay. And I talked to some people, I said 'How is that? And they go 'Well, they beat the daylights out here.

John Wagner 21:58

It's hard every day you show up for three hours and you're you're going from one thing to another. You say 'You better commit to it, otherwise you're not going to make it. So my wife brought me there every day at 8:30 in the morning, and I started out with a walker for about a month. Finally I came in one that's, I don't want to use the walker anymore. And they're like 'Oh, John, you have to we have insurance issues. We can't have you falling down. I said 'I don't want to use the walker, I'll use something else. My wife bought me a cane.

John Wagner 22:30

They have this new cane called a hurry cane, it's got three feet on anyway. I started using the cane. I go, okay, I can do this. And then finally, one day, about three weeks later, I came in and I said 'I don't want to use the cane, I don't want to use anything. And they said 'Well, you have to. So they had me do a lot of tests. I was falling down, but I knew how to get up. And I just thought, I this is not going to work. I have to be able to walk without anything. And they're fantastic professionals, they really know their stuff, so I spent time doing outpatient therapy for about four months.

John Wagner 23:08

And I was finally released, and I still couldn't drive. They wouldn't sign off on my driving, which was a big deal, because my wife was doing everything. So they have, they're tied into the state drivers facility, and they said 'If you pay X amount of dollars pass these tests, then you'll go out with a certified driving instructor, and you have to pass that test. They don't take your license away.

John Wagner 23:39

They say, if you're getting an accident, you could be liable if they know you had a stroke and you didn't get cleared. So I went through that process, was glad I did, and I was driving again, and everything started to come together.

Bill Gasiamis 23:54

But it was that makes complete sense, right? Because that's negligence, and I've never thought about it like that before.

John Wagner 24:04

I was told by one of the gals that works at the hospital. She goes 'My friend's an attorney, he had a stroke, I guarantee you they will find out that you had a stroke, and if you didn't get yourself certified, you'll be liable. And I thought 'Oh my goodness. So they have these interesting tests, these walls of lights that flash on, and you have, you have to hit them every single one, you have to get 100% and I said to her one time, I said 'I got 98% I got 98 out of 100 now, pat myself on the back. She said 'That's not going to work, John.

John Wagner 24:39

I said 'Why? that one you missed could be a kid on a bike. They kind of put it in perspective. I said 'You're right. So I practiced and practiced, and I finally got my license back and started driving again, and that's when the hard work began, because it's tough to explain to somebody that's never been through a stroke. It's just It's hell.

Bill Gasiamis 25:06

How draining is driving and trying to concentrate and pay attention to all the things that going on, the movement, the light, the sounds.

John Wagner 25:16

All of it's aggravating to me. My brain was in a different place, everything was aggravating, noise, you know, just and I realized, so I started out driving slow,

and I've kind of continued that, what's the hurry at my age, what's the hurry? So I'm driving again. I've taken a couple road trips, that was another thing. I used to live at the airport, I was gone two weeks out of every month for 25 years. Once the stroke happened, it was very difficult to maneuver through an airport. I told my wife, I said 'Not only does nobody know that I had a stroke, nobody cares that I had a stroke.'

Daily Life and Coping Strategies

John Wagner 26:01

So you are when you're in that mix at an airport, you are just on your own. So I finally started doing some traveling, and it's worked out pretty well. I'm getting more and more comfortable, but you mentioned any of these side effects that I had for my stroke, only a little bit of weakness on my left side, because the stroke happened on my right side, just a little bit of weakness, which I'm now working on physically with weights and things like that. And I'm walking almost three miles every day. Considering two years ago, I couldn't stand up, that's having a lot better place than I thought I'd be.

Bill Gasiamis 26:43

Yeah, that's excellent. So tell me about how much weight you've lost.

John Wagner 26:50

I've lost about 25 pounds. It started right after I got out of the hospital, I was taking medicine, I think was ozempic. It reduced my blood sugar, it works. It just, you just don't want to eat. So I lost weight pretty quickly, I gained a few pounds back, but I'm still doing pretty well. So I'd say, overall, in the last two years, I've lost about 30 pounds, and that makes a difference.

John Wagner 27:21

That makes a big difference. Everything is tied to your weight, which I never really I didn't put that much stock in it, but now I see the big difference. Your knees, everything is all related to that.

Health and Lifestyle Changes

Bill Gasiamis 27:36

Because you avid listener, and you're doing all the right things, and you're

behaving yourself, and you really want to get better. I want to recommend a couple of books to you.

John Wagner 27:50

I've got yours, I like it.

Bill Gasiamis 27:52

Thank you. I was going to throw that in, I was going to I was going to throw in a cheeky mention of my book *The Unexpected Way That A Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened*. Well, I want to encourage you to read a book that's called 'Why We Get Sick. Everyone who's listening, I want them to go and get a paper copy or an ebook copy. And I will tell you right now, I'm just checking it out. I keep forgetting. I think it's Dr. Bickman, but I'll double check *Why We Get Sick*.

Bill Gasiamis 28:34

And it is by, there it is. It is by Ben Bickman, Benjamin Bickman, and it is the best book I've ever come across and read. I mean, if I can understand that, anyone can that explains the mechanism that creates illness in the body most of the time, and it's all related to insulin and high blood sugar. And he talks about all of the reasons why we get sick, and then he talks about all of the things that you can do to overcome that and get better, and then because you're looking after yourself, and you're motivated, and you're looking for new information.

Bill Gasiamis 29:23

I may have mentioned in a few of the podcasts that you heard, but if, in case you haven't heard it, also look at, forget the title, but look at *Eat Fat, Get Thin*. Now, it's not a book about weight loss, it's actually a book that explains the difference between eating what we now call the standard American diet, which is also the Standard Australian diet, and the standard Western diet, and shifting from that stuff that we've been sold since the late. The 70s, early 80s, about what supposedly was healthy and what isn't.

Bill Gasiamis 30:04

And it talks about going back to a time where nutrition didn't involve so many carbohydrates. So another great book that just explains the metabolic side of weight gain and illness and all that kind of stuff. It's not a book about weight loss, but when I read it, I'm talking about at the very beginning of my journey, probably 2014 somewhere there, it's written by Dr. Mark Hyman.

Bill Gasiamis 30:55

That book changed everything for me, just understanding some of the stuff that was impacting me negatively that I didn't know was, you know, certain foods again, and as far as they're just the best books those three.

John Wagner 31:14

I appreciate that one recommendation you made. Why We Sleep by Matthew Clark.

Bill Gasiamis 31:20

Yeah, it's such a good book.

John Wagner 31:23

It is never thought about it before.

Bill Gasiamis 31:25

Yeah, that's such a good book. Because what that why we sleep book does is, again, it just gives you a total, complete different perspective of what sleep is and how the brain requires it, and how it flushes the brain in the middle of the night during the sleep cycle, and it gets rid of toxins, and the and the cells shrink to create more space for the fluid to get in and wash it out, and then it, you know, and then they expand again as you wake up. I mean, it's such an amazing.

John Wagner 31:57

That's what little coffer covered in that podcast. It was, yeah, I had to listen to it 15 times. There's so much information, what's he talking about here? I mean, he mentioned, what's the word I'm looking for, when you start getting, when you when you get, it'll come to me in a second. You get sugar causes it in your, in your bloodstream,

Bill Gasiamis 32:32

Insulin?

John Wagner 32:35

Pardon?

Bill Gasiamis 32:36

Was it insulin, or something?

John Wagner 32:39

That insulin, it was a condition caused by not, not swelling, but shame on me.

John Wagner 32:48

Inflammation.

John Wagner 32:50

I didn't know what it was. Even after he explained it a couple times on the podcast, I still wasn't grasping that you can't be that hard. Let me listen to it again. So your podcasts are covered, they have so much information. You gotta listen to it.

Bill Gasiamis 33:05

So Eat Fat, Get Thin. That book is about decreasing inflammation, it's basically what it's about, and then why we get sick. Actually talks about the mechanism of of inflammation. It really gives you a deep insight into the inflammatory process. And then once you under understand that, then you know what type two diabetes really is. And then once you really know what type two diabetes is, and you think about how to reduce inflammation in the body, then that's where, in fact, get thin comes in.

Bill Gasiamis 33:37

And then you've got all the different pieces of the puzzle, and then you can implement and since you're an implementer, this is going to be perfect for you. If you've already taped up your mouth and doing that stuff, then you're sleeping better, and that is the beginning of decreasing your negative metabolic rate. Because sleep is one of the most important things to keep people lean and keep their weight off, and people who people don't realize that when they're sleeping and snoring and not getting good quality breathing during the night.

Bill Gasiamis 34:14

They're actually creating a metabolic process that keeps them overweight and makes it harder to lose weight, and then when they wake up in the morning makes them crave carbohydrates like breads and cereals and all that kind of stuff, because they are lacking the energy to get the brain going and they are addicted to that cycle that they don't know they're addicted to. It's just what it is, and you're being controlled by all these other factors.

Bill Gasiamis 34:40

And then you're looking at yourself in the mirror, going, how did I get this big?

And why can't I lose weight? And it's got nothing to do with the willpower. It's got to do with the environment is totally against you, and your body is just responding to the environment.

John Wagner 34:55

So Eet Fat, Get Thin. So you eat fat and get thin.

The Small Strokes Struggle and Sacrifices of Healing

Bill Gasiamis 35:02

Love it, yeah, it's a great book. It's one of the first books that came out that kind of started to challenge this low fat diet notion. You know, a couple of years after I got sick, I found that, I think it was around 2014 and I tell you what, it was a revelation, because it had nothing to do with stroke. It had to do with being having a healthy body to support recovery from anything, not just stroke, but also from cancer or heart disease or any other condition. It was just fantastic.

John Wagner 35:43

I can't believe what you went through. I felt guilty about all the small little stuff I had to deal with. And I started 'Oh, my God. I told my wife said this guy thought his skin was crawling, literally, and from that, whatever the name of that medicine.

Bill Gasiamis 35:59

Yeah, from Dixon method. Was a tough night.

John Wagner 36:02

You had a hard time with your memory a little bit correct.

Bill Gasiamis 36:06

Yeah, that was a tough night. I mean, waking up I was hallucinating and just talking to the wall. And then my wife's wondering, what is this? What is he on about? Like, what is he doing? Who is he talking to? And I just couldn't respond. And then when I came to one of the other symptoms was that I felt like there was bugs crawling all over my body and it was this steroid, the steroid dexamethasone.

Bill Gasiamis 36:33

It was saving my brain. It was keeping the swelling down, but it was making me so unwell in every other way. But, you know, it was temporary, and it was about saving the brain at that time, it wasn't about the other stuff. And I wasn't sleeping. Man, I didn't sleep for two weeks solid I'd be up.

John Wagner 36:55

You had a business going, it's unbelievable, I finally quit. I had been working in this industry for a long time, and I really didn't have an exit strategy. My son even said to me in the hospital, don't take this the wrong way, jab, and I'm kind of glad you had that last stroke. I said 'What? He said 'You were just going to keep working. He didn't have any exit strategy at all. And I said 'Yeah, you're probably right. I've been working since I was 12. Probably that's all I know, just keep working.

Bill Gasiamis 37:24

But was that an issue, though, for you, the working? Was that the issue? Or was out?

John Wagner 37:29

No, not at all. It was just, it was something I'd always done. I got used to traveling. I wasn't really thrilled about but I was gone quite a bit, and raised two sons, two great boys, but I just thought, I've had three strokes. I am not going to push this anymore, I finally retired. So that's enough of that, I'm glad I did.

Bill Gasiamis 37:55

You know what's good about retiring under those circumstances? What's good about it is that you got time now to actually start making some changes in your lifestyle and in your health and your well being, so that you can have a really good quality of life going forward. Because stroke takes for so many people, it takes the quality of life away, you know, whether they're in their 20s, 30s or 40s or 70s or 80s, that's the issue with it.

Bill Gasiamis 38:21

So what I like about the fact that you're not working is that you're going to have that time now to focus on yourself and get educated and implement strategies that are going to give you a good quality of life and avoid another stroke.

John Wagner 38:33

I was having a difficult time reading. I could read the words, but I couldn't deal

with the syntax of a paragraph, I couldn't put it together. It didn't make sense. So I said 'Okay, there's got to be a logical way to get to get interested again. I got my kindle, I mean, I like to read, so I started reading the backs of cereal boxes, simple stuff. And I said 'Okay. And then I realized at that time, when I started doing research, my brain was healing. The Neuroplasticity was a big factor, and it was creating new pathways. And I was starting reading became easy, and I told somebody else.

John Wagner 39:14

It's the weirdest thing. It's like somebody comes into your head and knocks all those books on the floor with all that great information, everything. And you know, the information is there, but you can't get at it. So I slowly, over time, the last few months, I've been reading a lot, and I love it, and it's easy again. So now, when I read something, I absorb it, whereas before I couldn't that's when I said to myself, work has become pretty hard. I don't know if I want to do this anymore. So I finally retired, and I think it's worked out pretty well.

Bill Gasiamis 39:51

Yeah, hopefully soon, though, there'll be no cereal boxes in your house after you read Eat Fat, Get Thin.

Bill Gasiamis 39:51

Exactly. What was the cereal box doing in your house anyway? We were sold a bill of goods for how many years? My goodness.

Bill Gasiamis 39:51

I know, unbelievable, I understand. I have no issue with it like now. It's just about re directing people and training them again and telling them you gotta stop doing what they've been telling you to do, because they've been deceiving you. And yes, cereal is the most terrible thing you can eat in the morning or any time of the day, but especially in the morning, it's the worst food.

John Wagner 40:28

I just read the article day before yesterday about the fact that when people get up, they get hungry, they have carbohydrates and sugar, whatever it is, bread, whatever he says 'That's the absolute you should be having protein, fats, the opposite, and we weren't taught that, so, yeah, gotta figure it out.

Bill Gasiamis 40:48

A little bit of steak, a little bit of egg, a little bit of bacon, some butter, and that's it. You're done, and just you're set to go for, you know, another three or four hours at least, you know, until lunch time. And that's the kind of stuff that makes people feel satiated. It changes the cycle from being that whole blood sugar high to a blood sugar low, which deceives the brain to think it doesn't have energy to access.

Bill Gasiamis 41:16

So it makes you crave another meal. So you go and have another meal in the middle of the day between, you know, breakfast and lunch, and you're forever eating. Humans never forever ate anything.

John Wagner 41:29

I'm still trying to figure out how to work in my smoothies. I love smoothies, fruit high in sugar, so I try to watch it, but with spinach or whatever, but I have a blueberry smoothie in the morning. I mean, guy said 'No, that's the time to do it. Your body wants fat and protein. Yeah, so I'm going to tell my wife when we're done. Bill said 'I have, you have to make me steak and eggs every day.

Bill Gasiamis 41:54

Tell her and yeah, that would be fantastic. Well, that's what I eat in the morning. I at least four eggs, I'll have some bacon some days or a little bit of meat. And when I'm too lazy, I'll just have four or five eggs, and I cook it in butter, and I just scramble it up and and then I'm done, and I'm good.

John Wagner 42:19

Your appetite too. It really does.

Bill Gasiamis 42:21

It fills you up, it just gives you good energy, it helps to wake the brain up. And it doesn't get you all hyper and stimulated. It just nice and smooth and allows energy to sort of come into you, your body, into your digestive system, and then kind of nice smoothly, just fuel you. So that's what's good about that.

John Wagner 42:42

Thank goodness. With the diabetes I've got some good habits that I didn't have, portion control, eating, slower, eating, the right thing. So I just watched my A1C and when that drops, I know I'm losing weight, because they go hand in hand. So I've made some positive strides there, but I'm still angry that I used to run all the

time, and now I don't run. I mean, I'm still trying to do my my biking. How long I tried?

Bill Gasiamis 43:15

Pardon? How long ago were you still running?

John Wagner 43:19

About six or seven years ago, quite a while ago? I was always, walking and hiking, but I used to run, because we ran a lot of miles in our program, at this high school program, and college I was involved with were high level competition. We ran all the time. It was nothing to run 12 or 15 miles, and then that would that brought me into this too. I told my wife, I come in after a 10 mile run, I'd say 'Oh, I'm tired.

John Wagner 43:49

But I said, with a stroke, you deal with fatigue, it's a whole different deal. When you have fatigue, your eyelashes are tired, your toes are tired. She said well, she didn't understand that, but you gotta go through it to understand it.

Bill Gasiamis 44:06

That's such a great explanation, your eyelashes are tired.

John Wagner 44:13

Your earlobes are tired, you're just overwhelmed. So she's she's always and this is, you've been a big help. She said 'You need to take a nap. I said 'Yeah, I do. She said 'Just sleep. And I said 'No, I don't need to sleep. I just need to lie down. My body needs to my body is telling me you're either going to lie down or I'm going to fall down. You can make that choice, I get to that point where you're just so weak, and then I lay down for 20 minutes. I feel fine.

Bill Gasiamis 44:40

Yeah, are you cycling, did you say?

Overcoming Small Strokes Challenges in Recovery

John Wagner 44:44

Just on a Peloton, I want to take my bike out this summer. I got on the bike, went about 100 feet of my driveway, promptly fell over and crashed, I had a helmet on,

but I was so disappointed. I used to go out and ride, and now I can't do that. So balance this winter, I will get myself in biking shape, so that next summer I can be more independent, is the word I'm looking for.

Bill Gasiamis 45:16

I've got a tip for you about that as well. So have you heard the episodes where I was falling off my bike.

John Wagner 45:22

No, what's the number of that?

Bill Gasiamis 45:26

There's a few. I mentioned it a few times, but ignoring what I just said, but I'll tell you now anyway, you won't need to go back to find it. So I used to ride my bike all the time. I had a, what they call a mountain bike, and just nice, comfortable ride. And I never rode on a mountain just along the suburban streets in my area, nice, wide tires, yeah, just comfy, you know. And my left leg after the brain surgery, would fatigue immediately within the first kilometer or two, and then that meant that I would have to shorten my ride or come back, etc.

Bill Gasiamis 46:03

And it was not fun, because I couldn't go out for as long as I wanted, and then when it fatigued, it would fall off the pedal, and it meant that the pedal would scrape on my shin, and then it would make a disaster of my shin, and it was no fun. So what I went and got was a stirrup just for one leg, my left leg. I figured if I put my left leg into the stirrup, then it won't slip off when I fatigue, and that I'll be able to get home a bit quicker and easier.

Bill Gasiamis 46:38

And that's one less thing I have to worry about. So I put a stirrup on my left foot, and every time I came to a stop, I couldn't get my foot out of the stirrup, so it'd fall over.

John Wagner 46:53

And then one time, mate, that's the only way I would ride, cos then you can force your feet a little further,

Bill Gasiamis 46:58

Yeah. So it kept falling over, and then that wasn't solving the problem. That was

creating another problem, I had a helmet on also. So anyhow, then I thought 'Well, how am I going to resolve this? And I heard somebody on another podcast talk about an E bike, a bike with a battery, powered, assisted pedal.

John Wagner 47:03

They're very popular around here now.

Bill Gasiamis 47:09

And they are amazing, because the fatigue in my left leg doesn't happen after two kilometers. In fact, it doesn't happen at all. And I can ride the 10 or 20 kilometers, and by the time I get back, I'm still in good shape, because the assisted pedaling takes away that initial effort that your foot has to make. And I don't need a stirrup because it doesn't fatigue and fall off the pedal anymore. And it's a such a gentle cardio exercise, and you're getting out and you're getting that wind in your hair and all that kind of stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 48:02

And then if you get fatigued and really tired, it will help you get back, because you can increase the level of support, you can go from almost none to a lot. So might be something worth considering. If getting on the bike is tiring and fatiguing, then you might want to consider an electric.

John Wagner 48:27

We have a Peloton. You familiar with them? Time bike. Sometimes it takes me 10 minutes to get into the to get the pedal hooked up, because our legs are maybe a little bit out of whack. And I thought, this is the little stuff about strokes that nobody talks about that's aggravating as heck, and it wears on you. So I'm working on that, but it's a great bike, but I'm going to look into an E bike. That's a great idea.

Bill Gasiamis 48:54

Yeah, have a think about it. It's those little things, you know, not being able to get your foot into the bike pedal and all that kind of stuff, you realize, like, where the nuance is in the recovery, it's you're walking and that looks great, and you're talking and that looks great, and all these things you're doing are great. But then there's this little fine, it's like the Formula One car, right? It's like to get that extra second, the amount of resources and research and money that's going to go into it is just immense, and that's kind of where you're at with the foot on the

pedal.

John Wagner 49:29

My wife used to get really angry with me because I was recovering I was walking, but then I started to get a little aggressive, and I've always been a hands on Tool Guy. And I said to her one day, I said 'I want to mount this, one of these solar lights on our shed. And she said 'Oh, can't you have Jack across the street? Do it? I go 'No, no, I got typical, typical guy, I got this. I got it. I took a job that normally would take me five minutes with. The lamp on in the dark. Took me three hours, I kept falling off the ladder, I kept dropping in the drill, and she finally came out.

John Wagner 50:08

And then she wasn't so happy. And him, would you please call Jack? And I said 'No, I got this. I'll do. Took me three hours, but I did, it got real personal up here in my head, but those are the things that just drive you crazy. Who are you going to talk to about it? Nobody, really. Yea, you gotta go through it.

Bill Gasiamis 50:27

Falling off a ladder, like properly falling or just not being able to get up properly.

John Wagner 50:32

Like a seven foot step ladder, literally falling off completely and then another, with your wife on this one. I'm not proud of this. We're we put a we built a pergola on our deck, my metal pergola, and one of the supports came the final one. I said 'I'm going to put that up. She said 'Be careful. I said 'Okay, I climbed up there and I was drilling some holes, and I pushed the drill so hard it pushed me back off the ladder onto the deck, not understanding what a hemorrhagic stroke is.

John Wagner 51:07

You know, well, she was outside of our home watching me on our electronic doorbell and the next thing. So I was laying in the deck. It's almost comical. I was laying on the deck, and my phone was next to me, and my phone started buzzing, and I grabbed the phone, and there were these expletives 'Would you please, damn it, wait till I get home. I said 'Okay, alright, fine, so, but I won't do that anymore.

Bill Gasiamis 51:37

You have to know you've done so much to get better from whatever you went

through, you don't want to injure yourself, and then have to deal with that as well.

John Wagner 51:45

Yes, even a broken home, anything you don't know.

Bill Gasiamis 51:48

No, you want to avoid further injuries. Mate at 73 you definitely want to avoid them and get somebody else to get on the ladder, for sure.

John Wagner 51:56

Yeah, that's true.

Bill Gasiamis 51:58

And it's not whether you can or can't do it. It's it's you. It sounds like you're not doing it safely, you're not doing it safely at all. Maybe there's still some part of your John.

John Wagner 52:10

Are you okay? I'd lay in the deck. Yeah, I'm alright, it's pretty silly.

Bill Gasiamis 52:15

I think we might have uncovered one of the areas where your deficits still are. It's in the safety. It's in being able to perceive what's safe and not safe, maybe it's one of your deficits.

John Wagner 52:27

I certainly was. I think I got a little smarter, but it certainly was. I just thought I'm going to do this because I was not used to being restricted. I'm sure anybody that's had a stroke would feel the same way. There were times I'd be in my closet trying to put a shirt on, and I couldn't button the button on my shirt. I was almost crying so much effort to do it, and I couldn't do it, and I just kept trying and trying, and those are little things you don't read about in the stroke manual. Yeah, they drive you crazy.

Bill Gasiamis 53:01

But up until the stroke the first one, did you have a really good run with health?

John Wagner 53:08

Well, a couple of years, it's funny, you're bringing up all the good stuff, like you were, you were living in our house a year before that. I was asked we were part of

a Mayo Clinic Executive Health Plan. My boss kept saying 'Go up there, it's free, just go up there. So I went up to Minnesota, and they put you on a rack, and no orifice is safe. They look at everything. And I was getting ready to leave a couple days after, and he said 'We live in Chicago. I said 'Yeah, getting ready to leave, and he goes 'I don't think so.

John Wagner 53:42

I said, why? Well, your stress test shows you got major blockage on your right and left ventricle. So he said 'The only thing is, you have type two diabetes. Your blood sugar's high. I would not I would do the surgery tomorrow, except I can't do it with high blood sugar because of inflammation and all that. So he said 'If you can lose, if you can bring your blood sugar down in 90 days, I'll schedule you for a bypass surgery.

John Wagner 54:11

And I did, and we did, and up until then, I had never been in the hospital. It was all new. So I had a bypass surgery, and I recovered from that, I did pretty well, and then this came along.

Bill Gasiamis 54:25

How does that recovery compare to this current recovery?

John Wagner 54:29

Piece of cake, as they say 'Wow, you know, my ribs were sore for a few couple months, but the strokes a whole different thing. It's so encompassing, every party being is affected, and this past summer, six months ago, I was standing in our living room talking to my wife in another room, and I just completely lost my balance. Out of the blue, I fell back and crashed onto this fan, this fan of hours, my wife came running.

John Wagner 55:01

What happened? I said 'I wish I knew I just lost my balance. So I'm still dealing with that. Did you have did you have balance issues for a long time? Or I still do. It's aggravating 'Yeah, I turn too fast. I have to be careful.

Bill Gasiamis 55:18

I shift on my right side and keep going. My left side kind of doesn't do its job to cause to create balance. It just kind of lets go, and my right side keeps going. So I have to find the wall or steady myself or take a double step.

John Wagner 55:38

Hard to explain to somebody I had fallen down so many times it became normal. I thought 'Well, when I got home from the hospital after my stroke, I told my wife, I said 'I'm going to need some things, and we got chair for the shower. We safeguarded the our home, but I still, I remember standing by our stairs, you know, a large staircase, and I just lost my balance, crashed down, and I thought 'What the heck was that, not knowing what was going on. And I thought, is this going to be like this forever?

Caregivers and Frustrations

John Wagner 56:11

Luckily, not, but it's very real when it happens. I smacked my head on the floor, and I was a mess so and none of this was funny to my wife, because she had to put take care of me every time, it was rough, and she that's one of the things I talk about with this group, is the importance of caregivers and their role in helping people that have had strokes, and it's really critical, how around here, there is no caregiver school. When you leave the hospital with your stroke victim, you're on your own.

Bill Gasiamis 56:54

Wow, so there's no caregiver school at all for anything, it's ridiculous. Actually, how old were you when you had the bypass surgery?

John Wagner 57:06

I was 69 or 68 it was a couple years before my stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 57:13

Yeah, and as a single bypass.

John Wagner 57:16

It was double bypass, a double and it really was the best thing to do, because I just have been going to a heart specialist recently. He said 'Everything looks great. I did an EKG, you're doing terrific. So it was a good move to have it done. Yeah, and he said 'You would have, you certainly would have run into problems.

Bill Gasiamis 57:40

So when you have so much good health, until what the appearance of good health? Because you're not healthy a year before your double bypass surgery, you

know definitely not right? When you have such good health for, say, 65 years, and you've never had a thing to consider or think about then, it makes sense that when you get to, you know, five years down the track and now you're dealing with stroke, it makes sense that you're going to feel frustrated by things like, I can't do up my button because you've been able to do it up for 69 years or 70 years.

Bill Gasiamis 58:19

And now all of a sudden, it's not working. It takes a little bit of time to wrap your head around that and come to terms with the fact that something has changed, you've been injured. There's an injury you have to heal from, recover from, whatever the words are, and you are physically changed. You're different than what you were so and then the identity of but I've always done this. Why can't I do it now? Like that conversation, did that happen in your head? Is that kind of how it goes?

John Wagner 58:48

Yes, I'm still dealing with the hassle of the effects of type two diabetes, which I never really gave second thought. Nurse said you're going to get some kind of neuropathy. I said 'Oh, well, now I realize it's really an inconvenience, dropping things and stuff like that. You made a great point, though, on one of your podcasts, and I wanted to bring it up. You basically said, I lost my train of thought.

Overcoming Small Strokes Challenges and Exploring Solutions

John Wagner 59:19

That's what happens and that never, when you run into issues like that, you had to do one of two things, either deal with it or just curl up in a shell. I got mad at myself and said 'No, I'm going to do something about this. I don't know what I can do, but I'm going to do something.

Bill Gasiamis 59:46

So have you heard about Alpha Lipoic Acid?

John Wagner 59:51

No.

Bill Gasiamis 59:52

Okay, so Alpha Lipoic Acid is something that is meant to help with neuropathy, and it supports.

John Wagner 59:59

Can you spell that?

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:00

Yeah, Alpha, A, L, P, H, A, dash, L, I, P, O, I, C, Lipoic Acid.

John Wagner 1:00:15

I'm interested in that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:16

It's a supplement, and it supposed to support, neurons and the extremities and all that kind of stuff. So there's a lot of research about it. So this stuff I don't just make up, right? There is a lot of research about it, and studies you can find. So if somebody's curious about what Alpha Lipoic Acid does. It helps people with neuropathy, settle it down in some cases. And when I've Googled it, the first thing that's come up like it says the benefits of Alpha Lipoic Acid, and it's just a little tablet, like any other supplement.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:57

It may help lower blood sugar levels. It may help with weight loss and benefits other weight loss medications. It helps the liver, it can help the skin and ALA. May help with pain, burning, itching, tingling and numbness in arms and legs. So whether you have peripheral neuropathy that is caused by type two diabetes or a stroke. It may assist to settle that down and take the edge off it, improve it a little bit.

John Wagner 1:01:34

That's good to know right now. It's an inconvenience, but it's certainly not getting better. So I look down the road and try to find out where I'm going to be. I gotta do something, I know what I was going to say to you. I once my brain started getting back, started healing. I could tell it was healing, little things that I couldn't do before. I would have an issue lifting something or or just grabbing something. And also one day I could do it, and I said 'My brain's healing.

John Wagner 1:02:03

I could pick up on that, or somebody was saying something to me, and I absorbed it, and I said 'I wouldn't have absorbed that two months ago. And I'm just really glad that it your brain will heal, and you just have to appreciate it and realize that this is not a sprint, it's a marathon, and take a long time.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:28

Are you a glass half full kind of guy normally?

John Wagner 1:02:31

Always have been. That's why I went through depression, never been depressed. I'm not a depressed person, and I couldn't get off underneath it. It was, it was terrible. And I took it out of my wife a number of times, snapping at her, and she not knowing what the hell was going on. But it just overtakes you. You just, I'd be watching something, and it affects you. I mean, I told her, I said 'I just laughed all the way through the movie platoon and cried through Caddyshack says something is something not right.

John Wagner 1:03:08

So I started doing more and more research. Once my brain started getting back, I could do research, and I some of the things you've talked about, gratitude, things like that. They're actually not just mental your body produces. I know the one of the best podcasts that you had was the ability of the talking about the three brains, the gut brain and the heart brain. And I thought 'Who would have thought? Gut health. We I've always heard gut health is important, but now I'm starting to really think about it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:46

Taking your gut is your second brain. There's been books written about that topic, probably since the 90s now, and it has the same type of structure. It, although the shapes are different, microscopically, it has the same type of structure as the brain. It has neurons, it's where your serotonin is created and generated. You know, dopamine, all those kind of neurotransmitters that you hear about that are important from the for the brain actually occur in the gut, and the brain accesses those reserves and uses them.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:24

They're not created specifically in the brain. And when the gut is inflamed, your brain is inflamed. It's just they're connected, they're both. Those things are

connected, but then also your heart is probably inflamed. So it's not a single system. The system is all one.

John Wagner 1:04:45

Yes, another one, the heart and brain.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:48

And it's really good, and it's really important, because the the gut has memory, the gut has a language, so does the heart. The heart has language, you know, emotive language is all heart language. The heart also has neurons, it also has the same kind of brain structures as the brain the lot. It's all very similar, they're all very connected. They are, they all speak with each other through the central nervous system and the autonomic nervous system, and you can't have a healthy brain if you don't have a healthy gut, it's impossible.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:25

So people have type two diabetes and inflammation, definitely don't have a healthy gut. And if you heal the gut, and you make it about just giving your gut the optimum kind of resources and environment to work in, then everything else just comes on board. Later it's gut is number one, because that's where all your food goes in, and then once it's healed, everything else starts healing.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:51

It's a very simple process, but hard to shift your your thinking from old thinking to new thinking, where you know old thinking was a calorie is a calorie. It doesn't matter what form it comes in, but it certainly does like a sugar calorie is a completely different calorie to a butter calorie.

John Wagner 1:06:13

Any recommendations you may have on gut health, any book that encompasses those three brains, I find that really fascinating.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:21

Well, those two books will help with that, but also the other one is the book by Doctor David Perlmutter: Grain Brain. Doctor David Perlmutter so it sounds like it's a book about the brain, which it is, but it is about what goes into your gut and how changing again your diet will improve your brain health. So this just so much now, and these weren't around in so in such numbers, these weren't around when I first went through this in 2012 they started to proliferate after that.

Bill Gaiamis 1:07:10

And it there was this massive shift away from the old traditional, you know, food pyramid, where grains were the most food you ate, and all that kind of stuff, and everything has come along with it. And the guys who wrote this book are neurologists. The people who I've mentioned are experts in their field, which meant that they were dealing with people who had what they call type three diabetes, which is Dementia and Alzheimer's, and then they were having no success supporting people and helping people, and what they found was changing their diet really improved that.

Bill Gaiamis 1:07:51

And most recently, okay, I'm going to have the links to all of this stuff that I spoke about today in the show notes. Most recently, and I've heard a lot of these types of podcasts from these type people, but I listened to one that's fresh in my mind, so I'll mention it now there's a you might actually enjoy this, because there's a podcast called The Diary Of A CEO, and The guy's name is Steven Bartlett, and he is a, I think he's from the United Kingdom. I think he lived in England, I think.

Bill Gaiamis 1:08:30

And he's a really successful entrepreneur, but he has the most amazing podcast, and his most recent episode, he interviewed a lady called Dr. Georgia Ade, and they were talking about, she's a psychiatrist, a Harvard trained psychiatrist specializing in nutritional and metabolic psychiatry. So most of the interventions that she does to help people with conditions like well, like bipolar, like schizophrenia, like all these things in involve a massive shift of diet.

Bill Gaiamis 1:09:20

What people consume for food, and they talk about the keto diet as being the most beneficial diet to the brain and changing the brain chemistry and supporting a really healthy brain, and therefore positively impacting mood and other things that go along with it, amongst other things, she's not talking about diet is not the only thing that fixes these things, but what she talks about is the diet is definitely a massive it's like a massive cog in the wheel that it has a massive positive impact.

Bill Gaiamis 1:10:00

In people's well, being, physical, mental, emotional, the lot, right? And she was just a breath of fresh air to listen to her explain the interventions that she

recommends. And she's a researcher as well, so this stuff doesn't it's now being proven. It's now being shown, scientifically that is helpful, as well as people sharing their stories and saying, I did this, and I did that. I met a guy many, many years ago, probably around 2014 and 15 and 16 when I was on my early recovery journey, who had bipolar for many, many years.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:46

And it was causing havoc in his life, because when he was manic, he would have a whole bunch of things that he did that he shouldn't have done. And when he was depressed, you know, he would, he would go the other way, and he would really struggle with all the things that he was doing, and he went on a keto diet and told me that his bipolar had settled down so much. And this lady Dr. Georgia Ade.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:16

Talks about that kind of stuff as well how diet has now become a massive intervention into being able to support people that previously psychiatrists couldn't really help because medication doesn't really ever, she said, doesn't really ever solve the problem. It just kind of helps to alleviate symptoms or minimize symptoms or manage symptoms. So what I'm saying here is this is a big spiel on people really needing to pay attention to what they're consuming and how they're going about their recovery.

John Wagner 1:11:59

That's so true. You know, you made a good point on one of your podcasts recently about the fact that it's very cathartic what you're doing. You're able to talk with people that are dealing with a lot of the same issues you had. And I feel the same way. I say, I can't talk to my wife every time I want to talk about something she's had it. It's enough, well, there's gotta be somebody I could talk to about it. That's why I like to go and speak to these people that are dealing with all these challenges.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:30

I'm the same, and your wife is just like one of those, and my wife too, just like one of those people in the airport that they they can't see you've had a stroke on the outside and that don't care you've had a stroke.

John Wagner 1:12:44

That's it, it's so true. And another thing is, I tell these people when you come into

your house after you've been released, you're the only person in that house that had a stroke. When you're in the Support Facility, you got all these people around you and all these good vibrations. And then when you come into your house, guess what? It's you and the four walls. You better figure out how you're going to deal with it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:13

And that's been my journey, there's nothing better also, in a way of going home and everyone just expecting you to just get on with business, you know. And there's also a bit of motivation behind this, okay, I've gotta pull my socks up, like, I've gotta actually be a part of this family. I've gotta pull my, you know, pull my weight, get my chores done or whatever, like you have to, and that's kind of, it's tough love, but it's necessary as well.

Future Outlook and Goals

John Wagner 1:13:45

Well, one other point, I will say, and then I won't quote you anymore, and that you made a very strong point, and that is when sometimes you're going through I didn't. I have a very large family, I have 10 brothers and sisters, so we have a lot of people in our family, extended family. When I came home, I didn't receive the support I thought I would, and then it finally dawned on money, nobody knows what I went through, they have no clue. So yeah, they'd send me a text or how's it going, but no specifics.

John Wagner 1:14:20

Because we didn't know anybody that ever had a stroke. So you made a point, and that is, sometimes it's better that way, then you find a way to pull up your pants and do it, and tough love, you're right, yeah. Otherwise, you're waiting for people to do this, waiting for people to do that. I just finally said I'm doing it myself. And he little angry about it, but then you have to get over it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:50

What was the hardest thing about stroke for you, do you think?

John Wagner 1:14:53

Well, physically, I'll tell you one thing I thought about this the other day. It set me back three years mentally. It zapped my confidence, I used to give speeches in

front of engineering groups. I was very glib, I could come up with information, you see, now I sometimes I had to wait a minute go digging for that word, and all of a sudden that was gone. And not that it won't come back, but your everything changes so quickly, and just a few hours in the hospital, you realize 'This isn't the half of it.

John Wagner 1:15:33

And I can't do the things I wanted to do. Then you also made a good point, and that is, maybe if you can't get back to where you were. Don't take it so hard, because where you were got you where you are. And I thought that's brilliant, you have to make changes. Not happy about it, but I I'm doing more than I thought I would two years ago. I couldn't walk, and I'm walking three miles a day. And to me, that's progress.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:02

So, that's good. What's what has stroke taught you?

John Wagner 1:16:10

Well, it's basically taking care of my body. I mean, my whole package, my whole my ID, everything, mentally, physically, really, at take I took it for granted before, and never had any issues, and was always traveling, going places, and never gave a second thought. And now you realize it's we're pretty fragile. So for the next few years that the good Lord has planned, I'm going to try to do my part. You ever come to Chicago?

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:47

I've never been to Chicago. I have been to New York in 2013 and LA and Hawaii, but never made to Chicago.

John Wagner 1:16:55

Some kind of concert or a meeting you have to go to.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:01

Let me know when the next strike conference is in Chicago, and I might come up there, but it has to be warm, John.

John Wagner 1:17:10

Yeah, I get that. I get it in the fall months here are just gorgeous. August, September, October, they're beautiful. But I was just thinking 'No, I've never

really wanted to even look and find out about stroke conferences, but now I do more and more research on little things, and before I didn't, that's the one thing I would say about a stroke, it's a double whammy. You're incapacitated, and the information you really want you can't get because your brain's not cooperating, and then the more you get it together, it's like, okay.

John Wagner 1:17:47

That's when I started listening to your podcast. At first, I was like 'I don't want to hear this, I don't want to hear this well as a commercial. I don't want to hear that. Now, it's like, Bring it on, I want to hear everything. And I'm so glad that you took it upon yourself to do it, because aren't too many people out there doing that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:18:07

I was aware of the same issues that I needed information I couldn't get it, and I couldn't understand it when I did get it. And then, as things started to improve, things started to settle down, and my rehabilitation started to really take hold, and I noticed the benefits of all the work I was doing. I thought 'Okay, now that I can, I'm going to do something about it. Reading is not my best tool. I don't enjoy it, but I enjoy getting information from a book, but it's really difficult for me to read.

Bill Gasiamis 1:18:07

How do you like to get your information? What's your preferred way?

Bill Gasiamis 1:18:43

Podcasts and audio books, definitely, and they're great. But I have read, I have a bunch of books that I read. If the topic really interests me, then it's okay, like, I'll push through and I'll get it done. So it has to really interest me, and all those topics really interest me. Now you can tell, right? So I'm not lacking the information, and I know where to go to get it. What's great about creators these days authors is they're on a bunch of interviews, so you can go and listen to them on YouTube or wherever.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:18

And that's so if I'm in Chicago, see, I've avoided Chicago, you know why? Because I've watched too many mob movies. And as far as I'm concerned, Chicago is just a big mob city, and you don't see anybody other than the mobsters, you know? So I want to avoid them.

John Wagner 1:19:41

It's an awesome city, yeah, but like any other big city, there are areas where you probably still break from, you know, but it's a great city, and it's one of the world destinations as far as conferences and things like that. So it's always very bustly and lot going on, but you gotta steak dinner if you ever make it here if you want.

Advice for Stroke Survivors

Bill Gasiamis 1:20:08

Yeah, awesome. Thank you. So final question before we wrap up is, what's a little bit of wisdom you'd like to impart on your fellow stroke survivors who are listening?

John Wagner 1:20:23

Be ready for a long, drawn out recovery, it's just the way it is. I tell people when I'm talking, look, you're going to have good days and you're going to have days that are crappy. That's just the way it is, don't worry about it. Embrace the wins, is what I say, you're going to have little wins and little losses. It's just part of life, and instead of getting mad, just cut fate, move on. So when good things happen, tell your caregiver about it 'Hey, look what happened to me, so they can see that their work is helping you.

John Wagner 1:21:00

And I didn't realize it was going to be I'm here. I am two years into my recovery, and sometimes I feel like it's just a few weeks, but you only have one other option, right bill, sit and cry or get up and do it, so that that's the that's the best thing I could tell anybody, you're going to get through it. You're going to it's going to take a while, but you will get through it because I did, and I didn't think I was going to walk anymore. But I don't like to get too preachy, but I tell these groups, look, I don't want to tell you so much about what happened to me, blah, blah, blah.

John Wagner 1:21:37

I want to tell you what you're going to find out when you walk out the door, because that information is not out there. I mean, there was no place to go to say 'Well, I've had a couple strokes. Can you tell me what I'm I'm going to find? And you have to kind of figure it out and research it like you've done. And hopefully your your wife doesn't leave you and run off somewhere.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:02

Well, maybe hopefully for her, she does, she might benefit greatly, I don't know. Well, we would only find out then, but look John, thank you so much for reaching out being on the podcast. I really appreciate it.

John Wagner 1:22:20

This is terrific talking to you, and keep those podcasts coming, because they're really well done, tons of information, and I really appreciate it. If I can never do anything for you across the ocean, just send me an email. And again, I know you get out and about once in a while, but if you ever get near Chicago, I've got a gun, don't you worry, and I know where all the good spots are

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:47

Fabulous.

John Wagner 1:22:48

Anyway, thank you for your time. I really appreciate it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:51

That brings us to the end of this inspiring episode with John Wagner, from his remarkable resilience after three strokes, two brain surgeries, to his journey of taking control of his health and living life to the fullest. John's story is a testament to the strength of the human spirit. If today's conversation resonated with you, I'd love to hear from you. Please leave a comment, like and subscribe to youtube if you're listening on Spotify or iTunes, a five star rating or review would be amazing.

Bill Gasiamis 1:23:24

It helps others discover the podcast and join our grand community. Remember to check out my book *The Unexpected Way That A Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened*. It's available on Amazon by searching my name, Bill Gasiamis, or at recoveryafterstroke.com/book, and if you'd like to support me or the podcast directly, head to patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke. Thank you for being here, for making this podcast a part of your recovery journey. I'll see you in the next episode.

Intro 1:23:57

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Intro 1:24:27

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Intro 1:24:52

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Intro 1:25:16

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