

Stroke After A Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Choke - Jake Straus

Experiencing a stroke at age 24 from a Brazilian jiu-jitsu chokehold was a major setback for Jake Straus' health. Recovering is going well and recently Jake got back into the ring and is preparing for competition.

Instagram

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Transcription:

Bill Gasiamis 0:00

Most people who talk about weed classified as a drug, there's no middle ground for it. And then they kind of say, well, you know, weed's bad. It's always going to be bad. But you had a weed brownie and you had this really amazing experience.

Jake Straus 0:14

Yeah. And at the time, I was terrified, and I hated it. And I wanted it to end. But one of the most important things that happened to me and I think it's because I, and maybe a lot of people, all we ever think about is what we want, like, how can this serve me?

Jake Straus 0:30

And how can I get from here to here? And when that happened, when I was on that brownie, I just was looking at myself, like way more introspective than ever before. It's like, again, it's like, who am I? And I'm not perfect, you know, I'm far from it.

Jake Straus 0:51

And I guess I just never really sat back and looked at myself, you know, I kept feeling sorry for myself because I had a stroke. And because I can't do this and do that. But I started actually thinking about other people's feelings, I suppose.

Jake Straus 1:06

And the way that I affect them, and I just really didn't want to be a negative effect on people. I really didn't. I wanted to if people were gonna remember me, I want them to remember me positively.

Intro 1:22

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

Bill Gasiamis 1:35

Hello, and welcome to another episode of the recovery after stroke podcast. I am Bill Gasiamis, your host and recently Spotify released a new feature, which allows people to rate their favorite shows, in the same way that the apple podcast app allows it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:51

So if you think that the show deserves it, I'd love it if you leave us a five-star review. This will help the show rank better on search engines. It'll help newly diagnosed stroke survivors find the show and it could make a massive difference in their recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 2:05

So go to your favorite podcast app share what the podcast means for you it literally will make a huge difference not only to stroke survivors but also to their caregivers who as you know do it tough when they have to deal with somebody who is recovering from stroke after being a regular person and just going about life and then suddenly becoming a stroke survivor caregiver.

Introduction - Stroke After A Brazilian Jiu-jitsu



Bill Gasiamis 2:31

Now this is episode 188. And my guest today is Jake Straus, who got in touch with me after he listened to an episode of the recovery after stroke podcast with Chris Martin who was on episode 175. And Chris is a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu participant coach and he experienced a stroke as a result of a chokehold.

Bill Gasiamis 2:56

A technique that creates the person who's being choked out, to tap out or to submit and therefore to lose the bout. Now Jake also experienced an ischemic stroke caused by a vertebral artery dissection that was caused by a chokehold. And it seems that it's a really, I think that's happening in the world of Brazilian jujitsu as the sport is becoming more and more popular, that people are being injured.

Bill Gasiamis 3:28

Now, what that means is that I'd love it if you shared this episode so that we can raise awareness in that sport, about how people become injured in the neck and in the carotid arteries or their vertebral arteries.

Bill Gasiamis 3:43

And as a result of that experience, ischemic strokes are caused by clots that occur after a tear in one of the main blood vessels that lead to the heart gets damaged from being pressurized or being squeezed by the arms of somebody in a Brazilian jujitsu bout.

Bill Gasiamis 4:06

So with that being said, I am really keen to raise awareness in this space of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. So please do share with anyone that you know, that is in the sport, and hopefully will make a difference at least help those guys recognize the signs of stroke and then go through the process of helping people who may be experiencing signs of stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 4:29

So when Jake experienced his stroke, he had to spend time away from his beloved martial art, which tested his identity and made him reassess who he was, and how he participated in the world. It brought him closer to his family and friends and made him a better competitor and a better human being.

Bill Gasiamis 4:49

Jake Straus, welcome to the podcast.

Jake Straus 4:52

It's good to be here.

Bill Gasiamis 4:54

You know what I do to get people back really quickly that I haven't spoken to For a long time that I've connected with so much, is I press record, I get them onto a podcast like a week ago.

Bill Gasiamis 5:08

And then we talk for an hour and a half. And then I tell them, I forgot to press record. So that I've got to get him back in a week so we can talk again. I so much enjoyed our conversation literally a week ago that I forgot to press record on. I'm just so glad that I was able to get you back again.

Jake Straus 5:27

Yeah, man. I regret nothing. You know, that was, it was a really good talk. I'm sure we're gonna have another good conversation.

Bill Gasiamis 5:37

Absolutely. The interest in having you come on board to the podcast was as a result of an interview that I did with Chris Martin, who is a jiu-jitsu enthusiast to say the least. And he's a coach and is somebody that's been around the sport for a long time.

Bill Gasiamis 6:00

And he was injured because of what's commonly referred to as a choke where people in the sport in order to submit somebody will put pressure on the carotid arteries or the vertebral arteries heading towards the neck to stem the blood flow so that they can pass out or tap out before, hopefully, they pass out.

Bill Gasiamis 6:29

And Chris was saying that the issue for him he believes is that he damaged one of his arteries, and as a result of that, he created a tear, which caused a clot and cause a stroke. He's back at training. And he's doing really well, but he wants to spread awareness.

Bill Gasiamis 6:48

He wants people to know about the risks of carotid artery dissections. Especially in the sport of jiu-jitsu, because it's, you know, where he hangs out. It's where all his friends are, it's where all his mates are. And he was really concerned about that issue.

Stroke After A Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu



Bill Gasiamis 7:07

So he came on, he approached me to come onto the podcast. And as a result, he has started raising awareness, because you found the podcast, and you felt that it was appropriate to reach out. Tell us a little bit about what happened to you.

Jake Straus 7:23

Oh, well with me. I competed at a tournament. And it was a pretty regular day, it went really well. It was successful for me. And right when I had gotten home about two and a half hours after the tournament, I just went cross-eyed.

Jake Straus 7:46

And while I was just looking at the floor. And you know, I got rushed to the ER by my friend and ended up finding out that I had a clot in my brain. And it took a little portion of my vision. But that was the only part of me that was affected by the stroke that I had.

Bill Gasiamis 8:10

What's it like when one of your eyes is cross-eyed? Sitting down? How does it affect your stability? How does it affect you? One eye's is working properly and one eye's facing the other direction?

Jake Straus 8:23

Yeah, it's almost worse than blindness, because you can see and it's a completely distorted type of vision. So everywhere that you think something is it actually isn't and what I always tell people is the sidewalk was on top of the grass.

Jake Straus 8:39

So I was completely unaware of where I was stepping. When I was walking and my friend, he grabbed my hand and was guiding me because I just couldn't see properly. You know, I could see but everything I was seeing was in the wrong spot. And it was really terrifying. I had no idea what was going on.

Jake Straus 8:57

It just kind of started and I thought that's weird. And it just got more and more distorted. And I was just fully crossed. I couldn't see what I looked like. But I had a feeling that I would look off and my friend said yeah, your eyes looking totally at the floor.

Jake Straus 9:16

And it was never good when doctors say I've never seen that. They told me when people have a lazy eye it goes left or right. It doesn't go up or down. And mine went directly at the floor. So that was interesting.

Bill Gasiamis 9:32

It isn't good when doctors say I haven't seen that before. That's definitely not

good. You want to go to a doctor that has seen everything before so that they know how to help you right?

Jake Straus 9:42

Yeah, exactly. Like I don't want to be a unique case.

Bill Gasiamis 9:48

The eye is looking good now as far as its position is concerned. But how is the vision? Is the vision restored is it as it was?

Jake Straus 9:59

No, definitely not as it was, it might be better than when I first got out of the hospital. But, it's a small portion of my vision, it's in the upper left area. It's not peripheral. A lot of people say, Oh, you're missing peripheral vision. That's not true. Because when I go far enough out of it, I can see it. It's, like right here.

Jake Straus 10:23

And then I start getting it back. Particularly when I look down, it must be just the spot in my vision when I look down. The spot that's a little up into the left really is just missing. It's dark. So I think we talked about last time, it's one of the most annoying things is like reading subtitles for a show. And then everybody's face disappears on the TV. So that can be pretty annoying.

Bill Gasiamis 10:54

Okay, so no foreign language movies for you my friend.

Jake Straus 10:57

Yeah, exactly. I can't watch anime and all that stuff. Without a little bit of a struggle.

Bill Gasiamis 11:03

Yeah, yeah. Fair enough. Okay, so that's not too bad as far as that's could have been worse. I mean, I hate to say that anyway, it's bad enough, you had a stroke. But that came back. How long did it take to get back?

Jake Straus 11:20

To get back my vision?

Bill Gasiamis 11:21

Yeah, to get back to your vision and your eye to sort of go straight? Did it go

straight? How did they get it back?

Jake Straus 11:28

I don't know if they even did anything. I remember when the nurse was kind of sitting with me, it was like, Hey, your eye looks it looks like it's back to normal. It took about 40 minutes to an hour. You know, I was definitely cross-eyed When they got me to the hospital, they put me in a wheelchair.

Jake Straus 11:46

They rolled me up, they got me to a bed. And it was just kind of sitting and waiting. They gave me they didn't give me any drugs to help they put dye in me. I remember that they put dye in me to be able to see my veins and stuff. But yeah, it took about 40 minutes, and then it kind of went back to the center.

Jake Straus 12:10

And when I had that dark spot missing. So I don't know if you've ever had that. But sometimes when you stare at something like if you stare at the sun, you know you kind of get like this, like dark. That's kind of what I thought happened. I was like, Oh, that'll go back to normal. And I eventually realize like, that is just how it is now.

Bill Gasiamis 12:27

And how old were you? And how long ago was it?

Jake Straus 12:31

I was 24 it was August 7 of last year so it's about six or seven months ago now.

Bill Gasiamis 12:38

At 24 Have you ever had through the sport that you're participating? Have you ever had any serious injuries that you can look back on and go you know the sport's pretty difficult on the body or it's brutal?

Jake Straus 12:59

Yes, I've had several to be honest. A lot, nothing like that. Nothing ever scare me like that nothing ever made me feel like you know this is gonna affect my actual life. But a lot of setbacks I've lost about two years to injury of just you know, having to sit.

Jake Straus 13:21

So it's something I'm used to coming back from injury and recovering and you know, trying to stay positive but nothing was like a stroke nothing felt more defeating for a little while than that.

Bill Gasiamis 13:35

And with physical injuries caused because of the combat side of the sport. There's a timeline usually isn't there? Don't they usually sort of say this is the timeline and in X amount of months you'll be back on your feet or using your arm again and then it'll continue to get better and stronger and you rehabilitate it and all that stuff. Is that what you've experienced has been in the past?

Jake Straus 14:02

Yes definitely they've always been able to kind of give me a timetable you know, they like when you injure your knee really bad you know it's usually like three to six months and the same thing shoulder I've had a lot of injuries I've cracked my tailbone multiple times that's the worst pain I've ever had in my life was the tailbone.

Bill Gasiamis 14:24

Was it from falling onto the mat or onto the ground?

Jake Straus 14:27

I fell on someone's knee and someone kneed me in the tailbone by accident. I had one of those door pull up bars. I fell doing pull-ups on that. So yeah, just I hope I never injure it again because that is the worst. The worst one by far it recovered quicker than the other ones but the pain is unbelievable in the beginning for that one.

The Mental Pain - Jake Straus

Bill Gasiamis 14:52

So what's it like now that your eye is, well you're recovered but your eye has lost vision. What's it like comparing that or thinking about that, to the other injuries, how do you kind of reconcile the difference in the two, one of them won't kind of ever go away, it'll always be there although technically you're healed.

Jake Straus 15:17

Yeah, that's exactly how I look at it, it's like, you know, the other ones involve more pain, but this one was mentally painful, because, and it's like, this is my new

reality. So I don't get as upset about it anymore.

Jake Straus 15:31

But getting back from the hospital coming home, it was very hard, because it's like, I just wanted that visual field to be there. And it wasn't. And it's like, it's very frustrating as somebody who's had 100% of the vision on their life, to be missing a good portion of it. And we talked about last time, it's like, it's just a constant reminder.

Jake Straus 15:53

And right here in my room, I don't feel like I noticed it as much. But when I'm in a big, well lit area, that's when I really kind of notice it, you know, when there's a big broad spectrum to look at, that's when I see that I'm missing part of it. And it just reminds me that I had a stroke. And, you know, this is a lifelong thing I'll probably have to deal with.

Bill Gasiamis 16:17

Does it also remind you that you're mortal? Or is it just reminding you you had a stroke? What's the what's the big deal about it? I mean, you know, why, why is it affecting you? Why is it why was it so difficult to reconcile at the beginning? Which part of it?

Jake Straus 16:36

Yeah, I think you're right about that mortal thing. I mean, it definitely makes me a little worried. It reminds me that something like that could happen again. But I think in the beginning, not only was it that, but it was just grieving for the loss of a part of me, if that makes sense.

Jake Straus 16:54

Like, I mean, you know, it's one of the reasons I don't have tattoos, is I don't have anything against tattoos, and I think they look good, but I don't like permanent things. And feeling like it's permanently gone really disturbed me in a strange way that it's hard to put into words, but it just was really disturbing to me. If that makes any sense.

Bill Gasiamis 17:17

Do like permanent good health.

Jake Straus 17:20

That's okay. Yeah, I'm alright with that.

Bill Gasiamis 17:25

I'm glad. Yeah, I suppose your sport is really hard on the body, any combat sports are especially boxing, it doesn't seem to stop a lot of people getting in the ring again, and again and again, and again. Did it ever cross your mind that I'm not going to do this anymore that I have to stop this?

Jake Straus 17:49

Yes. And it was just the most depressing part of my life. For sure. I've never felt more. I built an identity out of this. It's what I felt like, made people start liking me because I kind of was an outcast. Growing up, I always felt like I was on the outside of stuff. And I've always felt mediocre. I've always felt like, you know, I'm not terrible at anything.

Jake Straus 18:14

But I'm also not very good at anything. And this is the first time it's like, I was really good at something and people respected me for it. So when I felt like I lost it, it was just, it was the hardest thing I ever had to deal with. And really, like, I just tried not to think about it because when I thought about it really being over it was just killing me inside honestly.

Bill Gasiamis 18:39

Did it really feel like you were going to lose friendship, respect, was it an ego thing? What was it specifically that you're afraid of?

Jake Straus 18:53

I think my ego was definitely involved. And you know, I guess I didn't think people stop being friends with me but I was also thinking of the new friendships and it's like it's just like, This is what people know me for like I'm not even me anymore if I can't, which I don't think is true now. But I mean, it was a real thought of mine. And it was kind of hard to picture where I was going to go from there and what would be consuming my time in the future.

Bill Gasiamis 19:28

At 24 this reminds me of a midlife crisis, the description that you've given it because I'm 47 and I haven't really had a midlife crisis. I don't know what people do. My stroke didn't cause one I didn't think about my identity changing, becoming negative in any way.

Bill Gasiamis 19:52

I just saw it all as a positive. I thought, wow, I get to reset and redo things completely different again because I can't do things the way that I used to. And now I have this new awareness about life being interrupted by serious health issues, one that could have killed me.

Bill Gasiamis 20:15

And there's so much I haven't experienced there's so much I haven't done, there's so much I haven't tried, this so much I haven't spoken about etc, that now's the time to do it. Because I don't know when life is over. And even though I'm 37, and it took me a good five or six years to get back on my feet, where I started to feel myself again.

Bill Gasiamis 20:45

I had a lot of concerns about life might end soon, and I might have missed out on all these things. So let me just go after them now. And then if life is long, which I expected to be into the 80s and beyond, then I will have had another 40 years of experiencing all this awesome stuff that I didn't do for the first 40 odd years.

Bill Gasiamis 21:13

And my identity has never been so rigid. So stuck in one position that when all my faculties were taken away from me that I felt like oh shit, I've got to get back to my painting job. Like, I never thought that, perhaps because I wasn't so passionate about my job, as you are about your sport, and how you've grown into it, and how it's grown around you and how It's become such a massive part of your life.

Midlife Crisis

Bill Gasiamis 21:46

But when people get to a midlife crisis in their 40s, or 50s, it's often I see it in mums, a lot of mums who have been caregivers for their kids. And then their kids fly the nest. And then it's like, what do I do now? How do I go about my life now? I've got all these things that I want to give to my kids that they don't need anymore?

Bill Gasiamis 22:13

Who do I give them to? And what do I do with that time? And who am I really?

And how do I fit in this world now that I'm not a mum, the way that I used to be a mum. So it kind of reminded me of that what you said you've had 24 years on the planet? Yeah, then you have a stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 22:32

And then it's like, Well, who am I now I think what I'm trying to get at is a really good thing to do for people who are listening and watching is actually understand that your identity is not just the one thing that you do, or you participate in, there's got to be multi-levels of identity in that.

Bill Gasiamis 22:54

And for example, in in jujitsu, it might be I'm a combatant, I get into the ring. But also have these other elements that I can participate in the sport in, say I can't get back in the ring ever again, for whatever reason. I could do training or I could I don't know make jujitsu footwear. I don't know what the word is or what the term is.

Bill Gasiamis 23:19

But perhaps there is more than just I'm a combatant on the ring. And that's how I identify my entire life nothing else matters. Perhaps I'm naive, because I'm not into a sport, where you are and you're trying to be the best because you don't muck around.

Bill Gasiamis 23:43

You definitely tell people that you want to be the best at it and you want to compete at a high level. So maybe you have to be more narrow-minded at that level. I don't know. But I thought I'd throw that out there. Just sort of see what comes back. How do you feel about what I've just said?

Jake Straus 24:03

I think it's right, I think that I was narrow-minded. I still am just maybe a little less but there is more to life than jiu-jitsu, there's more to life than your hobbies are like the one thing you do and I, you know, we talked about last time is like one of the biggest things is like, how I treat my family and my friends, like I want to be more available to them, at least like emotionally than I was and having a stroke.

Jake Straus 24:35

It was devastating at the time, but it's done so many good things to me as a

person and not only to like treat people better but also another thing you mentioned is like I take risks now. I do things that I normally would have said no to or like you know, I just like I'll buy the plane ticket I'll go I'll do whatever because I need to experience life because We don't live forever.

Jake Straus 25:01

And I don't want to regret it. I don't want to say, Well, I didn't really do anything but go to class, my whole life, you know. So it's done a lot to put things into perspective about who I am as a person. And just like, what I could still do outside of my one focus.

Bill Gasiamis 25:25

How come? How come there was no time for your family?

Jake Straus 25:29

Because everything was about training, and everything was about competing. And, you know, it's like, there's not a and also, I don't want to just put it to that I think I was just a rigid, like, you know, sometimes a hard person to get along with, and maybe I still am, but I'm a little better now.

Space Brownies - Jake Straus

Jake Straus 25:48

You know, I think we talked about it, I kind of had an epiphany, because I ate a weed brownie, it was a lot stronger than I thought it would be. And I mean, everything just flooded my mind. And it's like, I don't hug my mom enough. I don't, you know, I'm not nice to my sister.

Jake Straus 26:04

I'm not nice enough to my friends. Just a lot of things. And a big part of it was the stroke was being like, I can't believe this happened to me at 24. Like this doesn't seem like my reality, like it really felt unreal is like this is this really happened. And it's like, who am I? Right now? You know, it's like, I don't want to be this person. Basically.

Bill Gasiamis 26:28

Yeah. In we don't necessarily advocate, anyone taking anything that they shouldn't take, especially when they're recovering from a stroke, right. But I have had a weed brownie before. And I've also done mushrooms before. So I actually

understand that part of what you're saying.

Bill Gasiamis 26:55

But for the people that don't understand it. Can you give us a little bit of an insight into what happened? Like, how did you had this epiphany, I know that we kind of got you into this space. But how does that happen? How do you go there?

Bill Gasiamis 27:15

And then how do you get such a good outcome from this? Because most people who talk about weed classified as a drug, there's no middle ground for it. And then they kind of say, well, you know, weeds bad. It's always gonna be bad. But you had a weed brownie, and you had this really amazing experience.

Jake Straus 27:35

Yeah. And at the time, I was terrified, and I hated it. And I wanted it to end. But one of the most important things that happened to me, I think it's because I think I and maybe a lot of people, all we ever think about is what we want, like, how can this serve me?

Jake Straus 27:52

And how can I get from here to here. And when that happened, when I was on that brownie, I just was looking at myself, like way more introspective than ever before. It's like again, it's like, who am I? And I'm not perfect, you know, I'm far from it. And I guess I just never really sat back and looked at myself.

Jake Straus 28:16

You know, I kept feeling sorry for myself because I had a stroke. And because I can't do this to that. But I started actually thinking about other people's feelings, I suppose. And the way that I affect them, and I just really didn't want to be a negative effect on people. I really didn't I wanted if people were going to remember me, I want them to remember me positively.

Intro 28:40

If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you will 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'll make matters worse, and doctors will explain things that obviously, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask.

Intro 29:04

If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation. Stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you it's called a seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke.

Intro 29:23

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.

Bill Gasiamis 29:42

In hindsight, this disconnection from your family when you were just fully into your sport and your training, was it making you a better or a worse fighter?

Jake Straus 29:55

You know, that is a really good question. I'm not sure I can tell you I think I'm the So I've ever been right now. And I am more available to people. So maybe I think it's important for people to enjoy their life and do what they like. So I would say maybe it actually negatively affected me because I think I focus so much on one thing. And I maybe wasn't enjoying myself as much as I should have outside of it. Although I loved it but.

Bill Gasiamis 30:28

Sounds like there wasn't a lot of balance.

Jake Straus 30:31

Yeah, exactly. It was like this, you know, JiuJitsu, right here, and this is everything else.

Bill Gasiamis 30:39

And how your family now? Do you have more time for them? How are they enjoying you more?

Jake Straus 30:46

They definitely like it more. My sister says, I'm so different than I used to be, you know, and, and I'll just take her word for because I can't really speak, because I'm me. You know, I don't really think I'm that much different. But it's more like

what I hear from people.

Jake Straus 31:03

And, you know, I have a niece, she's about to turn one in about a month or two. So I want to be around for her. You know, I think they're enjoying it a lot more. They're terrified, because I'm still competing, and I'm back in it. So they don't want anything bad to happen to me.

Jake Straus 31:24

By the way, something new that I wanted to add that has changed since we spoke is both my sisters are doing private lessons with me, and they love it. And I love that they're starting to really like jiu-jitsu and I feel like they're actually starting to understand me more by understanding jiu-jitsu. And it's, and it's something you spoke about with your son. From speaking with me, you kind of also got like an insight into your son's mindset, right?

Bill Gasiamis 31:53

I'm devastated when I hear somebody had a carotid artery dissection in jiu-jitsu. I'm devastated because my son is fully into it. I mean, he's fully into it. And man, this is a kid that did fit in. This is a kid that did have friends, this is a kid, you know, that we created the perfect environment for him and all this bullshit, you know, around his life so that he didn't need to find himself and all this junk, right that, you know, we thought in our heads, right?

Bill Gasiamis 32:21

So we're a typical suburban, you know Australian family, and we just go about life. And we try and do the best for everybody and ourselves. And we work hard, and we do all that sort of stuff. And then my son says, I found this sport. It's like jiu-jitsu. It's like wow, awesome, right? I just see people who participate in jujitsu punching the heck out of each other in a ring.

Bill Gasiamis 32:43

And I can't deal with it. Because I've had an injury to my head. I've had brain surgery, there's screws holding my skull together. And I'm like, the last thing I need in my life is people going anywhere near my head, there's no chance I want to do that, right. And he tells me about all these amazing humans that he's met at jujitsu, you know, his coach, and his, the other participants, and you know, his teammates, and it's like, he feels like he's part of this community that he's never

really felt, although he always was a popular kid.

Bill Gasiamis 33:22

This level of community I don't think he ever had before. And they've got his back, and he's got their back, you know? And he's telling me these things, and I'm relating to it in my other non-combative communities, you know, where the people are amazing. And I'm like, wow how can this be possible anyway.

Bill Gasiamis 33:45

And then my son will say to me, I'm going to go see the fights. And then every once in a while, I'll sit down and watch the fights with him, you know, watch the Joe Rogan interview. Some of the best fighters in the world for the MMA bouts, and all that kind of stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 34:01

And you get beyond the fact that what they're doing is just hitting each other you know, that there is strategy involved. You know, that there is controlling emotions, you know, that there is controlling your breath, you know, that there is practicing, or implementing what you've practiced for months and months and months.

Bill Gasiamis 34:22

And there is so many life lessons. And you get to practice them and experience them in that time for the amount of rounds that you're in that ring for. And there's not many things in life where you get to practice your craft in such a intense and hostile environment.

Bill Gasiamis 34:47

Most of us just practice our craft in a benign environment. But you guys, you get to practice it under duress all the time. And it's like, far out man. I take my hat off to you guys, I don't know how you do it. And I'm glad that I don't do it. And I would never do it. But I really appreciate the fact that people get into the ring and put themselves at risk.

Jake Straus 35:14

They are. And I think we're all a little crazy. I think there's just a different mindset for people who love that kind of stuff. And, you know, I wish I could explain it better. But you know, it's not about, oh, for a lot of people, it's not about wanting to hurt somebody else.

Jiu-Jitsu As a Self Defense



Jake Straus 35:33

It's about a super competitive nature, and maybe even like a dominant kind of thing where it's like, you just want to be recognized as the best. And, you know, for other people, it might be just violence, but for them, as you said, it's strategy, it's being the smartest, it's being the best at their craft, and their craft just happens to involve punching people and kicking people, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 36:03

I don't want to say beyond that part as well, like, it's just, it isn't just that it's, that's one of the things that happens in that, but I'm thinking about it from the perspective of self-defense as well. There's an aspect to that, not that we need to be completely aware of the fact that perhaps we need a higher level of self defense.

Bill Gasiamis 36:30

Self-defense is kind of like, it's an insurance policy. It's something that you do in case something happens in the future so that you can protect yourself. But I see the merits of people who are like me who are not usually combatants, and who wouldn't know how to have a proper fight.

Bill Gasiamis 36:48

I see it being really a useful skill to know how to disarm somebody, or how to bring somebody to the ground and dominate them in a position and get into a position of power so that you take away their opportunity or their ability to harm

you. And to attack you. I see that as a way, way more beneficial part of the sport.

Bill Gasiamis 37:15

And I suppose the fact that you guys get to practice it so much means that you will be very good in a situation like that if it was ever to arise, and also to help other people if it ever arises. Because you can just act, you can just move rather than go into fight or flight and freeze and don't know exactly what to do.

Jake Straus 37:39

And I mean, the reason it's so well tested is because we play the game in practice. We don't pretend to play it, we don't drill it and then never actually go into the live situation like, and some sports, it's easier than others. Like, you know, you could always play a live basketball game in practice, I think I think there's a place for everything.

Jake Straus 38:02

But as far as self-defense, you know, there are people who teach you it. They'll show you the move, but then they won't have you use it in a real situation. So it's like all we do at jiu-jitsu is just go into real situations. Now it might not be like a street fight situation, but it's still applying your technique against someone who doesn't want you to do it. So you'll see how it works.

Bill Gasiamis 38:24

So you're a very kinesthetic person. That means you love touched you love feeling you love movement, you love all of that. My son he'll often say to us, Don't come near me. Don't touch me. Don't touch me. But then he gets involved in a sport like jiu-jitsu with grappling and people all over each other the whole time.

Bill Gasiamis 38:48

And he does that willingly. So I'm curious is that kinesthetic? That feeling that touching part of it a really important part of the sport? Is it something that you lacked or missed as a younger kid? This is something that has added to your life that being so close to somebody even in that strange, you know, weird grappling position.

Jake Straus 39:10

I think that's why we're so close. I think that's why you see, like, people treat each other like family because it's like, we're up close and personal. We're touching each other every day. And you know, we shake hands, we hug after

practice, we all stay after and we talk and I think it absolutely makes us closer than another sport or another activity.

Jake Straus 39:29

You know, you see a friend at work and you say hi but like imagine if you're a fucking engaged sorry, but I really close quarter activity all the time. And I kind of like your son's like, I didn't like hugs and kisses growing up. You know, I was not that guy. I was not that kid. So it's weird that I'm okay with it. As long as we're trying to strangle each other and break each other's arms.

Bill Gasiamis 39:53

That's what I mean, he'll give us a hug and a kiss when it comes over and when we get in his place or whatever, or when we meet somewhere. And that's all good. But you know, there's some times when as a parent, you want to go and hug your kid. And it's like, no, no, don't touch me. I don't want to be touched.

Bill Gasiamis 40:10

So standoffish, but that's all right. So your sisters? Are you surprised by their level of ability? Or did you learn something about them that you didn't know? Because combat sports, like that often teaches something deep. And you know about their dark side? Did you get to experience some different from your sisters?

Jake Straus 40:38

Yeah, and, you know, it's funny, I think it goes back to what you just said is like, we did not hug a lot. I think my middle sister would like hugs, but me and my oldest sister are very similar, and we're just not giving them out much. So this is the closest we've ever been, we've never, touched each other so much.

Jake Straus 40:58

We've never been this so I mean, that's a whole new thing. But also, seeing how my sister, she listens well, and I would say, she's actually had trouble with criticism before. But she's very good at dealing with the criticism from me when I'm coaching and saying no, that's not right.

Jake Straus 41:18

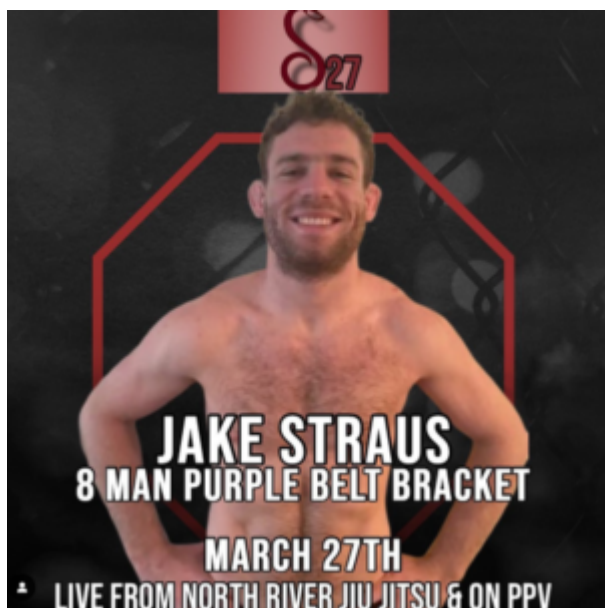
You know, she never talks back. And that's something I'm really appreciative of, and, you know, she wants to learn, and I respect that a lot, too. Um, my other sister she, she just tried for the first time, but it's hard for her because she laughs at everything. She says, sorry, every time because she's so like, nervous about

hurting somebody or whatever.

Jake Straus 41:41

So it'll be interesting to see her kind of get more comfortable with it. But yeah, I mean, I just, I never expected to stall this together. It's a really good bonding experience. And again, it's like I get to show them what I love more than anything in the world. So it's hard to not bond over that.

Raising Awareness About Jiu-Jitsu And Stroke



Bill Gasiamis 42:02

Yeah, I do love that. jujitsu brought you guys together. It's just brilliant. That's why it's important for me to speak about shoots, it's what we're doing is we're raising awareness about the injury caused to somebody's neck is that if you notice somebody in jiu-jitsu, for example, whose eye has changed direction, if you notice somebody whose mouth has drooped, who's not speaking correctly, who is not able to feel one side of their body who is not walking the right way that they were walking just before.

Bill Gasiamis 42:38

Who is saying something strange, don't take that lightly like take it really seriously and get that person help immediately. Because what we don't want to do is make assumptions that you'll be right or you'll walk it off, or it'll get better. No, because if it's something happening neurologically, we need to take action really quickly.

Bill Gasiamis 42:59

We want to make sure that people see jiu-jitsu as not being just a sport that injures people's brains because it does so much more than that. And people's brains get injured, even out of sports. So what about me just regular life just walking around and being myself? I mean, it'd be such a silly thing to say life sometimes if you're just living your life, you get a brain injury, you know, quit living, or quit doing that thing that you were doing beforehand. It's nuts.

Jake Straus 43:27

No, that's a doctor's, like go to is, Oh, you were doing that. And you have this happen. We'll just don't do that anymore. So well, it's not that simple. That might be a major part of my life, whatever that is. So sometimes we need help just working around it. But yeah, it's brought me major awareness.

Jake Straus 43:45

And I tell people all the time, and I think I'm a good person to tell you because I didn't quit doing it. And go, Oh, you shouldn't do that anymore. Like, no, I'm telling you, I'm involved heavily in it. I'm competitive. I'm telling you to be very careful to realize this happens.

Jake Straus 44:02

A lot of people are in denial. You know, they tell me I got the vaccine months before it and people want to tell me that the vaccine caused it or people want to tell me Well, what were you eating? And yeah, they just want to believe it's anything but jiu-jitsu. But it's once you accept that, I think you can do jujitsu more safely. And my goal is to keep people in it. So to do it safely, would keep people in the sport you know.

Bill Gasiamis 44:28

I love what you said about some people want to deny it. One of my good friends who's also somebody who works for me for my painting company is a smoker has been smoking his whole life. And he recently got diagnosed with emphysema. But until the time that he got the diagnosis, he was looking for excuses.

Bill Gasiamis 44:55

And we could see him looking for excuses to blame something else other than his own actions or his own inactions. Because it's, you don't want to believe that you're harming yourself, you don't want to believe that you're done the wrong

thing by yourself. Where normally it's other people that do the wrong thing by us. And we can easily blame them, or we can easily give them a hard time.

Bill Gasiamis 45:18

And we can easily say stuff about them that you know that it's their character, and they behave this way. And that impacted me negatively. And that's easy, because it's somebody else, but when it's us doing it to ourselves, that's a hard thing to live with, for a lot of people they don't want to be how do you blame yourself how do you attack yourself, you know, it's really difficult when supposedly, you're doing what's best for you all the time, apparently.

Bill Gasiamis 45:51

It's a really difficult thing I think the Nile in is part of also not taking responsibility. And that's what I love about your example of your sister, becoming able to listen to you in training, because she's realized that her staying well and safe is her responsibility in jujitsu.

Bill Gasiamis 46:14

She needs to listen so that she can stay safe, and not get caught out because the other person on the mat is actually trying to make her unsafe and put her in a position where she has to submit or in a position where her lights are gonna go out because they're gonna choke her out. So I think it's taking responsibility, does that resonate? Is that something that you relate to?

Jake Straus 46:42

Absolutely, I feel like I'm losing the thought here I had a really good thought. It's that constructive criticism is constructive for a reason. And I'd have it, I feel like most people have it, I have an ego. And we don't want to be told we're doing something wrong. Or, maybe we're scared to do something different than what we're comfortable with.

Jake Straus 47:07

But a lot of the time, that's there to aid us. And for her, maybe it was tougher in other areas of life. But because she knows I'm somewhat of an expert, or very well knowledgeable in this field, she has no problem taking the criticism, she has no problem being told, stop doing that, that's wrong.

Jake Straus 47:26

And it's nice to see that she only wants to do what is beneficial for her, which

would be to accept criticism. And that's it's like an example of really how I should be and how we all should be in life. Especially when we know someone knows better than us. We, should accept criticism more often.

Bill Gasiamis 47:47

And I love it. It's in the word, constructive criticism, it's constructing something around that criticism that's helping you later. And it's so beneficial. And I think if we, if we give the ego an opportunity to just go quiet, and then really pay attention, listen, I think it's easier to take criticism.

Bill Gasiamis 48:08

But also, I think, when it comes to combative sports, there's an element of survival. And I think when you're in a situation of survival, you'll take constructive criticism much easier, because your ego is not involved. Because it's survival, it's like life or death.

Bill Gasiamis 48:26

And it might never be life or death for your sister on the mat with you. But it's like, that's what it feels like when you're being pinned and grappled and you're being subdued and you're being dominated. That's definitely what the nervous is saying. The nervous system is going, man, we need to stay alive.

Jake Straus 48:51

Yeah. And I was very bad with that, from, like, 14, 13, when I started doing combat sports to, you know, about 20 years old, it was really bad. I just thought my way was the way. And I knew better than other people, somebody who's done something their entire life, but I don't want to listen to them.

Jake Straus 49:16

Because I've been doing this, and my coach does it it's like, oh, I don't want to do that. Because this has been working so well for me. I don't want to stop doing this. Like, yeah, it's working well, on people who are not good. I'm trying to tell you that just because it's working for you, you're gonna go against someone who knows what they're doing, and that's going to get you in trouble.

Jake Straus 49:33

And that's where it's really hard to listen to, because something is working all the time. You know? It's not always a good example, just because it's working. Because, you know, if you want to work at the mediocre level for the rest of your

life, and that's fine, but there's things that will work at the low level and then get you in trouble at the high level and that's everything in life.

Bill Gasiamis 49:53

How did you stay involved with the sport after the injury when you actually couldn't compete? How did you stay involved? Did you stay involved?

Jake Straus 50:02

Oh, definitely, I got a direct opportunity, because of it for something way different than I've ever done. And there was an event I was gonna do it's called submission grappling series. And I actually saw the promoter of the day I had a stroke, she competed at the event.

Jake Straus 50:20

And, you know, when I told them that I couldn't compete anymore, and they and I told them why, and they knew how devastating it was they just were like, is there anything you would like to do at the event? And I just threw out there, you know, I've always wanted to do commentary, I'd be willing to try it.

Jake Straus 50:39

They put me on the show. And I did commentary. And it went really well. I studied really well for it. And I ended up coming back multiple times. And I got linked to the MMA promoter.

Jake Straus 50:50

So I ended up doing lots of commentary work because of it. And I also started teaching the private lessons after what happened to me. So I became somewhat of a teacher after as well. I wanted any way of being involved at the time.

Bill Gasiamis 51:08

Yeah, I suppose that adding to your identity, it's adding to that level of, I'm not just the guy who gets in the ring and grapples. I'm not just a fighter, I'm not just this, I'm also this other person who can speak about the sport who can commentate about what's happening. And that is still being involved, but not necessarily directly, every time so that when you have an injury, you can not feel bad about it, you can be okay, well, I'm healing now I'm recovering. Let me dabble over here.

Jake Straus 51:45

Yeah, and it's like that knowledge now doesn't feel like it's going to waste. And maybe that's another thing that bothered me was like, accumulating all this skill and all this knowledge and not knowing what I was gonna do with it, it's like, I don't want to just sit on it. You know, I don't want to just pick a new career.

Jake Straus 52:00

And, just go, yeah, I used to do that. So being able to actually share it, and people appreciated it, which was one of the nicest things for me, when people would message me and tell me, they really liked my commentary, or they thought I said really nice things about them. And that really made me feel good. It didn't quite feel as good as getting in there and doing it. But there was a good feeling that came from it.

A Better Perspective

Bill Gasiamis 52:29

I wonder if it made you a better fighter as well, because I've seen whenever you see a boxing ring, or an MMA ring, there's the team is kind of below the ring, at the same height as the judges and at the same height as the commentators in the seat around the table.

Bill Gasiamis 52:51

So they level with the floor. And as a fighter, you're above them, and you're doing your thing. But then as a commentator, you're actually specifically looking at the technique, the way they got there, the way they implemented that the way they got caught out.

Bill Gasiamis 53:09

And you're also sitting at a different level. So the perspective is completely different, does a change in perspective, and the fact that you're talking about what other people are doing, observing them so intensely? Does it make you a better fighter? Do you see things that you missed while you were in the ring?

Jake Straus 53:31

Yeah, 100% makes you better. And it's hard to ignore what you should do, right? When you're telling people what someone should be doing. And you're going, you know, they should be placing their arm here they should be.

Jake Straus 53:43

And then you find yourself in that same situation. And you remember what you were saying? And it definitely plays into it. You're you're analyzing it on a level you never would have before.

Jake Straus 53:54

And you talk about you watch with your friends at home, and you maybe you kind of do like your own commentary, but it has a lot more cuss words and like alcohol and stuff involved.

Jake Straus 54:04

But when it's a job and you really have to be professional, yeah, man, you look at it with a whole new perspective. And I think it adds something into your brain. It adds a new wrinkle that you never had.

Bill Gasiamis 54:18

Yeah there's certainly a lot more cuss words and a lot more alcohol and a lot more things flowing when I'm watching it with my son or with his mates or whatever. I'm not big on alcohol. But yeah, it's pretty electric to be in the room with them while they're watching the sport that they participate in.

Bill Gasiamis 54:39

It's just a completely different feeling. I can't even imagine what it's like to be in the venue where it's happening. I cannot even imagine I've never been so but yeah, what's interesting is that the commentating that we do as couch commentators, I think, offers that there is a level of actually deep understanding of what's happening and how somebody caught out, we also get to see the patterns.

Bill Gasiamis 55:11

But just because we've seen the patterns, if you put us in the ring, we will not be in any position to defend ourselves, like, especially me, right? I could see what's happening, I could pick what's about to choke, how that person's about to get move into a choke, I could pick all these things.

Bill Gasiamis 55:28

But then I could never implement the strategy to protect myself against something like that, because I've never had the physical experience of what it's like to be completely dominated by somebody or when it did happen.

Bill Gasiamis 55:46

It was when I was five, and my older brother who had three years on me was doing that he was sitting on me, or he was squashing me or something, and I couldn't get up. But I think that the people who are watching the sport are definitely missing that other side of it by having never competed, you don't get the full appreciation of what you're experiencing.

Jake Straus 56:16

No, it's totally true. And, you know, that's like how I feel about when I watch football, like I never played football. But I mean, I love watching it. And another thing is, you don't have to be able to do it to understand what's going on. Because a lot of the best coaches were not the best players, were not the best fighters, I think it's rare.

Jake Straus 56:37

And maybe it's because of the ego that somebody has to be so good, you have to have an ego, you have to be single minded. So I think a lot of the best coaches are not the best when they competed.

Jake Straus 56:49

There's some former world champions who are good coaches, but a lot of them are not, you know, a lot of them were guys who may be in the amateur ranks, or, you know, competed a bit, but they just had the understanding in the know how, but maybe not the physical gifts and whatnot.

Bill Gasiamis 57:07

So you seem to be able to the way you're talking makes me feel like you'd be able to switch ON and OFF. You switch on your ego, and then you switch off your ego. Is that true?

Jake Straus 57:19

Yes, for sure. And I got an ego, I definitely have an ego. I'm not afraid to admit that, I've had a high sense of self-importance from a young age.

Bill Gasiamis 57:33

Is that what made it difficult for people to relate to you for you to have friendships and all those things in those early years is that what was hard about you not knowing where you belong, then fit in? Was that part of it?

Jake Straus 57:47

I think that was part of it. I think I was very out there, too. I'm a very strange guy have a very strange sense of humor. And what I tell people really often is that the things people didn't like me for and thought I was weird for when I was younger, the same things people really liked me for as an adult. So I'm very happy with adulthood. I don't feel like I have to put up a mask or anything anymore.

Bill Gasiamis 58:19

Maybe you were just quicker to adopt behavior than most adolescents and teenagers, maybe you just got there sooner maybe you were mature for your age or something.

Jake Straus 58:32

I was an old soul. But I'm also I don't know how I can be mature for my age, but then I can be really immature too I guess I'm a very strange guy. You know, the more you know me, you'll start figuring it out. You know, I had smoked weed for so long.

Jake Straus Keeping The Humor

Jake Straus 58:49

I finally quit January. And some people thought maybe it will get better. It is 10 times worse now. Like now, you know, the real me and I'm insane. So it's pretty funny seeing my friends go like, wow, I thought that would make it a little better.

Bill Gasiamis 59:07

I think weirdness and all that behavior, I think it's appropriate in the right context, like anything, isn't it?

Jake Straus 59:17

Yeah, for sure. I mean, I don't want to be overly.

Bill Gasiamis 59:23

Rigid in a funny environment. You don't want to be the stiff in the room when everyone's supposed to be laughing. And vice versa. You don't want to be the guy that's making people laugh in the funeral while it's happening.

Jake Straus 59:36

Yeah, that's a good way to put it. You know? Rigidness disturbs me. There's

something very off putting to me about people who are afraid to open up and I won't say be yourself but just be like silly like. That for some reason bothers me. It's hard for me to make friends with you. If you can't make fun of yourself or make fun of me. anything that's going on around you?

Jake Straus 1:00:03

And that the jokes never stopped. I mean, when I was in the hospital with a stroke, I had the mask on half of my face. And I was pretending to be the guy from 300, who was missing an eye. So like it literally never stopped. Even when I was crying, it's like one man, I'd be crying, and then making a really stupid joke about me being blind or whatever. So that's just me, I can't help it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:28

I don't think you need to apologize for I think it's a really amazing thing. Because it helps. That's what helps people get through, I mean, the dark times can be really dark, you need a way out. And you need to experience every level of emotion.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:42

Because if you don't experience it, those are the emotions that kind of hang around and cause problems later on in life, the ones you've never dealt with, or the ones you've never allowed to come forward or the ones you've never faced, you know. So, yes, you have to experience the mall.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:02

And I think laughter is one of those little, it's one of those bridges, that gets you to the next one. And it gives you a bit of respite, it gives you a bit of a relief. And it also gives you good endorphins, and it gives you I imagine serotonin and all other stuff that we need in our body.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:22

And it gives us kind of like a little gap a little bit of respite to get us to the next shitty time or shitty feeling or whatever it is. And then hopefully, we've dealt with a lot of them. By the time we've, we've been beyond our stroke for a number of years, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:42

I certainly have been in counseling since about the age of 25, about your age, and I do not, I have not stopped yet. I'll be turning 48 This year, and I still go to

counseling regularly, because I do all those things that I'm saying. But I'm not always good at talking through things with the right person.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:04

It's difficult to find the right person to talk things through with so that I can A get them out of my head out of my soul, out of my heart wherever I need to get them out of. And all we do at work all day is poke fun at each other all day.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:25

There's five of us, nobody gets away with it. And sometimes. And you can see when somebody has had enough when they finally go, that's it. I can't take another joke anymore from you and just shut up and don't talk to me. You know, they're going through something else at that moment.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:44

And it's time to sort of settle back and let it go. But the all the laughter of all the days before made it possible for us to get through our day. And now he's at that moment, and now laughter is not appropriate. Okay, now let's stop. And let's let them get deal with that. overcome that. And let's get back to laughter and poking fun of each other when it's time.

Jake Straus 1:03:09

Yeah. You got to be able to read people on that. And yeah, that's why I'm always laughing at myself. I don't want to laugh at anybody else. But I know I can laugh at myself, because I know how I feel. So I mean, my friend call me when I was in the hospital, he was crying. And that really touched me in a different way to I mean, I've really felt close to I've never forgot that.

Jake Straus 1:03:34

But I mean, I was like, trying to make him feel better. I was saying some, I wish I could remember that kind of stuff. I was saying, but I was still trying to make him laugh, because I mean, we competed against each other. I beat him at a tournament earlier last year.

Jake Straus 1:03:49

And we just became really close after and we kind of both agreed we're going to become world champions when they were going to chase our dreams together. And when he saw that happen to me, it just kind of devastated him. And it was at that moment, I just was like almost trying to make him feel better even though it

was for me. Like I just didn't want to see him be upset.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:14

A lot of stroke survivors talk about trying to make the other people in the room feel better when they come to visit. That's a very common thing. I certainly was doing that for my family. The more I could be quote unquote myself, the less worried or stressed out they would be and it worked for some people but it didn't work for fathers, didn't work for my mom and dad of course.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:39

There was no bringing them back off the cliff. You know, they were a mess. My dad. I remember the first day I was in hospital. So I got diagnosed on a Friday. We went in after ignoring the signs and symptoms for seven days. I finally went to the Home hospital got diagnosed.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:02

And it was about 9pm when I was told there's something, we noticed something in your brain. But I told my wife to go home and look after the kids at the time there were teenagers, young teenagers. And I didn't tell my wife either. But the next morning around my wife, I said, Hey, listen, they've told me they found something and take the kids to my parents and come and see me in the hospital.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:31

And we'll talk through with the doctors, they're gonna come in. So tell my parents, nothing. Don't tell them exactly what's happening just yet, because we don't know. And we'll tell them later. But tell them I'm in hospital and they need to come and see me right?

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:48

So my wife does dropped off the kids. The kids get all looked after or whatever. And then my parents come to see me. But my dad that forgets to take his blood pressure medication. My Dad's six foot something right? Six foot one, and he's about in kilos is about 140 kilos, which is big right?

Jake Straus 1:06:15

Yeah, I'm 77. So it's a lot.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:18

Yeah, right. So I want to convert it quickly to pounds.

Jake Straus 1:06:21

For our American viewers. Like what is that? What is a kilo?

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:31

308 pounds.

Jake Straus 1:06:33

Yeah, it's a lot.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:34

Right. So he forgets to take his blood pressure medication. And out of their home into their backyard, there are two steps down to the ground. He takes one step down, he feels dizzy, loses his balance, and he falls into the courtyard. And my mom is half his size, and a third of his weight.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:57

And now my dad, on the way to come and see me has collapsed at home. There was such a mess, right? My parents were a mess.

Jake Straus 1:07:05

Yeah your poor mother.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:06

Yeah, there was no bringing them back from the brink of you know, jumping off the cliff. And I remember my mom comes up to the ward to see me. And I'm like, where's Dad? And she said well he's downstairs. Well what the hell is he doing downstairs? Well, he fell over at the house. And he's in emergency.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:30

Like what's going on? So I'm still able to walk and talk and do all that stuff in the first part of the bleed. Like the first bleed that I had still had me looking perfectly normal. Nobody could tell that there was something wrong other than me. I walked downstairs and I go and see my Dad is lying in emergency he's connected to all the monitors.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:51

Dude, what happened to you, man? Because I've collapsed I fell over because I was coming to see you and I forgot to take my blood pressure medication and look at me. You know, I came to help you. And now I can't even do that and he was a

mess. He was a complete mess.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:06

So I couldn't bring them back from the seriousness of it until they knew that I was okay. And I answered the question. Are you okay? A 101 million times until that time, it was I was not okay. And it was for a lot lot, a long time a lot of years or couldn't get him to just chill out and be comfortable with the fact that when I actually told them I was okay, I was okay.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:34

They were also adjusting with the new me because I'd be fatigued some days or some days I wouldn't be up for a visit or sometimes old and go and see them or whatever. And they struggled a lot.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:46

So I'm not sure how I got to this point. But yeah, that's my experience with your it was your friend who really felt sort of really upset for you and you are trying to make him feel better. Are they okay? Are your friends and family Okay, now or they still kind of harboring a few concerns?

Jake Straus 1:09:12

I think they're always gonna have some concerns. I've calmed them down immensely. I think the longer I've been training and now I've competed three times. They're starting to accept that like, I can do this and I'm gonna be okay. That one friend though he actually I mean, everybody who does jiu-jitsu is like really like, Oh, you're fine. He's the only one it's like, still, like, I've talked about us jokingly, like competing again.

Jake Straus 1:09:38

He's like, I do not want to go against you. He's like, I just don't want to try to choke you. Like I just can't, you know, and he's just shows me how much he cares about me though. I mean, he gets really worried. Every time you know, he just kind of is relieved when it's over. And, you know, he never because my parents have said some things that bother me.

Jake Straus 1:10:00

Like, you know, I'm doing the biggest competition in my life and going to Las Vegas, April 1. And you know, I told my mom about it. And she's like, well, you're gonna tap if they get you in a choke, right? And like, that's not what I was hoping

to hear. I was hoping to hear oh, good luck, or, you know, I think you'll do good.

Jake Straus 1:10:17

Or whenever, you know, like, Oh, what an awesome opportunity it was. That's the first thing that goes in her head because she could care less what you know, she just wants me to be okay. But they're a little bit more at ease. They're a little bit more at ease.

Knowing When To Tap Out - Jake Straus



Bill Gasiamis 1:10:33

Yeah. And that's the thing about knowing when to tap is really important, too, isn't it for the people that are up and coming, who are not yet able to defend somebody coming in to choke them, that's really good. It's really important to know, in the training phase, when to tap?

Jake Straus 1:10:53

Yeah, and when, when there's no escape, don't wait for pain to start happening. Don't wait till you're about to pass out. If you're not actively trying to escape, it's really over. I mean, let alone if like, you feel the chill coming, maybe even if you feel like you can't escape, but the choke is on, you got to just, you know, accept it, and you get to restart.

Jake Straus 1:11:13

That's the beauty of it, you can fix your mistakes, you can think about what you did wrong, and you can fix it. It's okay, that you got caught, you know, it's not like

you're actually going to get better if you somehow survived this, you know, it's like this weird mentality we have, where if we didn't tap out, we did something right that day, and we did, like you were wrong for even getting caught in the first place.

Jake Straus 1:11:33

And the other thing I was thinking about was how I had all those major vision issues. That lasted for like a year where, where my peripherals would get really dark, I'd see things spinning, just the lights, everything would just get really strange. And I went to an eye doctor, and I was totally fine. In regards to my eyeballs, they're still totally fine. There's nothing wrong with my eyeballs.

Jake Straus 1:11:58

And I kind of just wrote it off as okay. Don't do that. If you have vision issues, and there's nothing wrong with your eyes, it probably is something with your brain. So, you know, go see a neurologist, I would say and get an evaluation on that. Because it could be maybe a sign of like a miniature stroke or something. Because I think that's what was happening to me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:23

Yes, man, that's a great thing to say. Because vision issues that come out of nowhere is not your eyeball it something else. It could also be your eyeball. And there could be some deterioration in your eyeball. But even that's serious right here. And that's something that you need to do something about.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:45

But your optometrist or your ophthalmologist, or whatever they're called, when you go there, and they look at your eye, they'll say, your eye looks perfectly healthy. There must be something else causing your vision issues. And they know the next thing to say to you is go and see a neurologist go to the hospital, go and get a scan, they'll know that that's the next thing to say.

Jake Straus 1:13:07

Yeah, and I wish they did that with me. They didn't do that with me. You know, they just said no, your eyes are fine. You know, they never said that. Well, they just said my eyes were fine.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:18

Yeah, so your eyes were fine. They didn't look beyond the eye. Your eye? Yeah,

yeah. Yeah, I was physically healthy. And perhaps that's one of the things we don't know what to ask them, to get them to give us the right response so that we could take action. In hindsight. Yeah.

Jake Straus 1:13:40

I wish I was more. I wish I was more curious about what was wrong with me instead of because we just want to keep training. That's the other thing I'd say about athletes. If we can get any kind of clearance from a doctor that says no, you're okay.

Jake Straus 1:13:54

We're gonna take that and run with it. I told you I had I went to five doctors. Four of them told me never to do it again. One told me that it was possible. Guess who I'm listening to?

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:07

Yeah, I know, man. Look, life is actually full of risks. Every single day you get in a car. You get into a plane, and a car is way more dangerous than a plane by the way. You walk down the street, life is a risk every single thing that we do every time that we do, and we cannot live life, trying to avoid death or trying to avoid risk or trying to avoid injury.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:36

It should be in the back of our minds, but I don't think it's necessarily going to need to be in the front of our minds because it's going to rob us from life. And I am certainly never jumping out of an airplane. I'm never jumping out of a perfectly good airplane. I'm okay with that. It's not robbing me of life.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:57

You know, I'm perfectly fine with that. But I'll tell you what, there are definitely things that I'm going to do. If somebody says to me, should we do that, if I can do a very quick risk to reward calculation, and the reward is immense, and the risk is manageable, then I'm going for it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:17

Because I did change my perspective on how I'm going to experience life as well. 37, I was pretty narrow minded, I was pretty rigid, narrow-minded about people pretty rigid about life. And I think I was sometimes as funny as I was, in my own little world. Or as good as I was, I was bloody boring, because I always said no to

things.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:43

So I said, Ah, man, we need to do that later, all we do is to find the excuse, or we don't have enough money for that now or whatever. And it was such a lot of shit. And my wife had to deal with me saying no, no, no, no to any, to everyone, for her entire time that she was with me, you know, like, and still is.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:05

But from 37, when she said, we have to do this now that we're healthy enough to do it. Because later on, we don't know what's coming. And I'm like, You know what, you're right. But I still couldn't get my head around being the one that organized it. I had to outsource it to her and said, listen, if you arrange it, I'll come along.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:26

I don't know why I can't arrange it. But if you do arrange it, I'll be there. Let me not overthink it. I'll let you do all the programming, calculations, whatever you need to do you do that. And I'll just turn up, and we'll have a lovely experience. And I think I was trying to allay my concerns and my anxiety by not being involved in the lead up.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:50

And now it's like, well, she's booked at all, we've got to go, we can't not go. And it's like, Alright, I'm there. I'll go. And then I had the best times and most of that was traveling, right? One of the first things we did, we went to, we came to the US, you know, we traveled to the US.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:06

And we did Hawaii, we did California, and we did New York. And in Australia, one of the things that we get to see every New Year's is the ball drop at Times Square. That's like, that's what they show here. We get to see Times Square and the people there and all that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:28

So my wife said, wouldn't it be good if we went to Time Square to see the ball drop in a New Year's? I'm like, Yeah, that would be good. So we were so far away from it, you couldn't actually experience the ball drop. But I had my camera and I zoomed right in, and I could actually see the ball drop on my camera, and we

were there.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:48

And it was freezing cold. You know, in New York in I think it was 2012. And it was going into 2013 was freezing cold. There was millions of people on the street. We were there with the whole family. And I never would have had that experience. I don't believe if it wasn't for me experiencing a stroke, and then thinking that I might not live to see another day.

Jake Straus 1:18:15

I feel like a lot of the revelations that you have, and the same ones that I've had, and I would imagine a lot of other people, but it's, I keep saying it's like you gotta bite the bullet. And it's like you said when your wife booked it now you got no choice. And it's like, that's what I'm kind of doing now. It's like, let me just send it let me just press yes. And then now I have to do it.

Jake Straus 1:18:39

And I'm always gonna be happy that I did it. It's like, we always, like you were kind of it's like, we always think we're gonna find the time for it later. But it's never right now. And it's like, we have to do things right now. We can't put everything off to later because later just becomes later again.

Jake Straus 1:18:57

So like, we have to do it now. And I'm excited to go to Vegas. You know, that's gonna be interesting. And, my bracket, it's gonna have 250 people, I signed up on there as about 237. So there was only about 13 spots left. And I was like, I better do this now, because I'm going to regret. It's another thing that I would have normally went maybe next year. And it's like, why not just do it now? Why not just try it?

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:26

So did you put it off and put it off and put it off until almost the last moment?

Jake Straus 1:19:33

Yeah and I almost I almost was a victim of putting things off again, but I just did it. I was at the gym. I was lifting weights. So you know, I could have told myself I'll do it when I get home. Maybe I wouldn't have had enough time if I got home though. So I just I just sat down on a bench and I just did it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:54

I was gonna say how much harder is it now for somebody to choke you out now that you've had that injury and you want to totally protect yourself? Are you better at being able to protect yourself in the ring?

Jake Straus 1:20:08

Way better, I rarely have to tap the chokes. Because I'm a million miles away from any choke attempt, you know, if they happen to get to it, I do tap. And even when it's something weird with my neck where normally when I left a neck crank, it's not a joke. But, it's way harder now. Because I just keep myself safe.

Jake Straus 1:20:28

And I think a lot of the time that I got submitted, or that I get submitted, because I'm at the point where I'm pretty good is, when I'm consciously lazy, it's like, because I know what I need to do a lot of the time, and I'll do it.

Jake Straus 1:20:43

And when you can make me work hard enough to finally go. You know, and like, relax, then you can grab something. So it's when someone's aware, it's very hard to get them, you know, when somebody is active and aware. So I'd say it just makes me more conscious.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:00

Consciously lazy.

Jake Straus 1:21:03

Consciously lazy.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:05

You're aware that you're going into a lazy phase.

Jake Straus 1:21:10

And still being lazy.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:11

Wow.

Jake Straus 1:21:13

A lot of the losses I've had were like that. It's like, I'm tired. I've almost told myself, I'm not gonna win this one. I've done that a few times, you know, and a lot

of the losses I've had, it was like, not today. You know, not all of them. And those are the losses, I'm least bothered by ones where I just was trying as hard as I could throughout.

Accepting Defeat - Jake Straus

Jake Straus 1:21:39

It's not about getting submitted or anything, it's about the fact that I consciously accepted defeat. One on the on the tournament where I had a stroke, I lost, I went through, I won three matches, I lost one. And that loss is one of the ones that I'm least bothered by, because I was losing by a lot of points.

Jake Straus 1:21:58

And I just decided I was gonna do something really risky because I had nothing to lose, I knew I was gonna lose if I let the time run out. So I took a big risk. And then he got my leg and he tapped me out with the heel hook, which is a type of leg lock. And I had absolutely no issue with it because it was like, I didn't watch the clock run out.

Jake Straus 1:22:18

The worst thing to me is watching the clock run out and knowing that you're going to lose when the time runs out. I'd rather get submitted. Everybody's different. I know people who would rather survive and go at least I didn't get submitted. That's not me. Losing is losing to me. You can lose by an inch you can lose by a mile you still lost. Same thing when I win though.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:39

Oh, no, that's alright, I was gonna say. It's interesting, because in sport, I hate teams that watch the clock out while they're winning. And they get the win and they get the points and I get it. They might even get the trophy because of that. But it's such a terrible way to watch a sport, when you know, you're not even giving the opposition a chance to beat you. And then beating them to show that you actually are better than them. Do you know what I mean?

Jake Straus 1:23:08

Oh, yeah. And, you know, but there's a reason that, when there's a certain amount of time on the clock, you kneel it's like why give them a cheat. I understand both mentalities. Why give them a chance that you don't need to. But

as a spectator, it's never fun. You don't want to watch somebody, like, go for the win over the excitement.

Jake Straus 1:23:33

But I gotta tell you another thing. I've lost excitingly, and I've won boringly, and I got way more support when I won boringly people like seeing this people like seeing your hand raised people don't care that much. It turns out, because I was not happy with my first performance coming back.

Jake Straus 1:23:34

But I won. And everybody was just looking overjoyed. I was like, yeah, it wasn't the best performance. They don't care. They don't care. They just want to see you win the Patriots can win by three points for the rest of time, and their fans will be happy. I'm telling you, man.

Bill Gasiamis 1:24:11

I don't know about that. We had in the 500 CCS, we had a motorcycle rider Mick Doohan, who was the best for many, many years. He was about six time world champ. And he was just dominating the sport dominating the sport, there was nobody there was anywhere near his level of dominance for the time that he was at his peak.

Bill Gasiamis 1:24:40

And that we're talking about him has been the person who's making the sport boring. You know, there's something about that. And it's not about him. It's about the people coming up behind him who are not up to the task. That's what it's about. And yet he gets the criticism for making the sport boring.

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:05

But the the rest of the field is just, they're the boring ones. They're the ones that can't actually compete at that level. So yeah, it's an interesting philosophical conversation. But I hear you, I would rather you you personally as a spectator is not watch the clock, I would rather you right?

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:30

Do all those things, you know, I would rather you be but be given the opportunity to, to win. And then the other person shows you that they are the true dominant fighter by beating you because they actually are better than you in every way shape or form. I don't know. Like, it's just me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:53

But if I was on the mat, you know, maybe that completely all that stuff I just said goes completely out the window, and that's perfectly fine as well. So I'm speaking from a naive base, from no real experience in the sport. So who am I to say I would, I would rather let you guys make your own decisions and, and feel comfortable by them or not feel comfortable by them.

Bill Gasiamis 1:26:19

And that's fine and learn from them. You're somebody that's learnt so much from combat sports, so much from stroke, and together, the lessons have really shaped you to be a way I don't even know the words, such a multi-faceted multi-level person who is going to continue to do that right. Now that you know how to do that, and how to be less rigid, and how to be less narrow-minded.

Jake Straus 1:26:52

I needed to be a more well-rounded person. Like every personality trait needed to be a little better. Because again, it was just too much tunnel vision for me. And you know, and then I had real tunnel vision. And now I see more, you know, I was more blind, when I could see more.

Bill Gasiamis 1:27:14

Wow. Man, that is an awesome way to end the podcast, man, thank you so much for being on the show. I really appreciate it. And I really appreciate you making three hours available of your time for me one and a half hours for last week that we didn't get to record. And another about that much this time.

Bill Gasiamis 1:27:35

So man, I wish you all the best I'm going to follow your, your career, I want to, I want to see what you do in the sport and how you grow as a person, how you develop at 25, you've got a lot of living to do, man.

Bill Gasiamis 1:27:48

And you're going to make a massive difference to a lot of people not only in the sport, but also in the other side of life, you know, this, this other part that you now kind of had to learn from and grow from.

There's More To Life Than Stroke

Jake Straus 1:28:04

Yep, I'm happy to be a part of multiple communities. And before we go before we close, I do want to, because it's something I said last week, but I just want people to know that. A stroke doesn't mean you're a disabled person.

Jake Straus 1:28:19

You're only as disabled as you feel. So there's always a way to get back to doing what you love. And it doesn't have to be exactly the same. But you know, don't lose hope on on living a good fulfilling life. There's always more to do. So I just want everybody to know that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:28:36

Yeah. And I have to add to that just look at those World Champion Paralympians, tennis players, all those people who decided that they were going to go jumping out of a plane after they had a massive injury or something, or all those people who are rock climbing with just their arms because their legs don't work. I mean, it doesn't mean anything, that life has changed.

Bill Gasiamis 1:29:04

Absolutely, that it's a bit harder, a lot harder, more mentally harder, more emotionally hard, all those things, but with practice and with work, and with focus on how to get beyond the problem, rather than stay at the problem.

Bill Gasiamis 1:29:20

So what are the solutions on going after the solutions? You can live a massive life and unbelievable life. And if it's early days in your recovery, or if it's early days in your, in your disease or if you're unwell and it's still early days, there's light at the end of the tunnel, there really, really is.

Jake Straus 1:29:37

Yes, it gets better. It gets better you learn to deal with it. And as we know, sometimes the life that you live after is more rewarding. You know, you're not gonna be the same but that's okay. It's okay that you're not the same because you're better than before a lot of the time.

Bill Gasiamis 1:29:55

Yeah. And discover who you are. Go about discovering who you are. I mean, that's

a perfect time to do that. Discover now. And I'll add this as well. And you know, and start saying yes, like I did a couple of weeks ago when my wife and her sister decided to go and get the nails done right?

Jake Straus 1:30:16

I was hoping you tell this story. I wanted you to tell the story again.

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:19

Yeah, thanks. So I'm gonna then as a result, I'll share the photo of my foot as well, my feet as well, right?

Jake Straus 1:30:27

Please do.

Bill's Day Out



Bill Gasiamis 1:30:28

I'll share the photos of me actually, in the chair. While I was getting the pedicure for the first time in my life, man, I'm 47 I can't believe I haven't had a pedicure yet. Right. The girl said to me, are we going to catch up on this Saturday afternoon in Melbourne in the city?

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:44

And I said, yeah, we'll catch up for sure. We're gonna go get a pedicure. And I'm like, Yeah, we're gonna go get a pedicure. So, we went, I had no idea. They knew what they were doing. And you know, my sister-in-law was sitting opposite of me.

So I said, take photos. I'm gonna send it to my nieces, you know?



Bill Gasiamis 1:31:01

And my nieces were just loving it. They were just chewing it up, they were like, man, that's so cool. Whatever. And then, the Thai lady. It's the standard typical all around the world. It's all Thai people that run nail shops, right? They're talking about us, you know, for sure. They're talking about me. And I'm really loving about me, in their own language to each other.



Bill Gasiamis 1:31:28

And I'm like, fantastic. This is the entire I'm having the entire experience here, you know. And then at the beginning, she didn't notice that the lady who was working with me she didn't notice that I had picked up nail polish. And I was

holding it just in my lap and just waiting there while she finished and she thought we were done after she did the nail clip and the polishing and whatever they do.

Bill Gasiamis 1:31:50

And the massaging and the cream. And man, my feet felt like so pampered they were amazing, right? And then she goes all done now? And I said no, no, not all done nail polish. And she looked at me you want nail polish. Yeah. And I picked the most brightest orange nail polish you can imagine.



Bill Gasiamis 1:32:12

And I said to do that, and she was shocked. And my sister-in-law was like, Yeah, of course, you're gonna get nail polish. And my wife's like, nail polish. And I'm like, Yeah, nail polish. What's the point of going all the way to a pedicure and leaving without nail polish man.

Jake Straus 1:32:27

You need the full experience?

Bill Gasiamis 1:32:31

Yeah, man. So it's been such a great thing for me to do. Because of course, there used to be a guy in my head. That had many things to say about people, especially men who went and got pedicures and nail polish. That guy I'm so glad to say does not exist anymore. That guy fucking left 10 years ago.

Bill Gasiamis 1:32:57

And let me tell ya, that's the best thing one of the best things that's ever

happened to me amongst all the hundreds and hundreds of other amazing things that happen in stroke. So yeah, whoever's listening to this, if you stay to the end, go to find the episode in the show notes, and scroll down to the bottom of the page, recoveryafterstroke.com. Check out this episode. And then you'll see Jake's image there. Click on that go into the show notes. Scroll right down to the bottom. I'm not going to make it easy for you. And you'll see the images of my fabulous orange nails after the pedicure.

Jake Straus 1:33:42

I would have to check that out.

Bill Gasiamis 1:33:43

Yeah. So man, do it. Jake. It's been fun, so much fun again, talking to you. So thank you for doing it again. And I really look forward to like I said, following your career, and I wish you well in the competition. And, man, I'm written for a man so you know, I'm gonna, make sure that I'm there if you ever need anything, please reach out.

Jake Straus 1:34:11

I appreciate it, man. Thank you for having me. I really love what you're doing. So I'll be following you as well. This is a really great thing that we've been brought together. So I appreciate it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:34:21

Yeah absolutely. Well, thanks so much for joining us again, on another episode of the recovery after stroke podcast. I hope you got something out of it. And I hope that you appreciate going to and checking out the photos of my feet after my pedicure and nail polish experience.

Bill Gasiamis 1:34:44

It was something different. And I've got to say it was a real real lots of fun, and I really enjoyed it. And I really enjoyed connecting with my wife and my sister-in-law in that way, which is something I've never done before. So do go to recoveryafterstroke.com slash episodes, and then find your find find this episode with Jack Straus episode 188.

Bill Gasiamis 1:35:08

And check out the photos of me sitting in the chair. Now, if you enjoyed this episode, please comment, like, share, tell me what you think if you're watching on

Instagram, if you're watching on YouTube, leave the show thumbs up, subscribe, hit the notification bell to get notifications of new episodes as they're being released.

Bill Gasiamis 1:35:28

And if you leave a comment that helps the episode rank better, and therefore it'll go to more people, the algorithm will make it so that it goes through and is seen by more people that will hopefully make it better for people who are stroke survivors searching for this type of content, find it and feel less alone and feel less stressed and upset about the situation they find themselves in.

Bill Gasiamis 1:35:55

And hopefully that'll make a difference in their recovery and the loved ones who are helping them with their recovery. So thanks so much again for listening. Like I said, leave us a comment I answer all comments myself, leave a thumbs up, like and share and I really appreciate you tuning in every episode and making this show possible. Thank you so much.

Intro 1:36:17

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Intro 1:36:34

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Intro 1:36:51

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Intro 1:37:12

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Intro 1:37:36

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