

Aphasia Recovery and Ischemic Stroke Recovery, 10 Years On | Eric Jackson

Eric Jackson has been living with the aftermath of Ischemic stroke and Aphasia for 10 years now. Listen to how far he has come and how he manages his condition now.

Facebook

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Eric Jackson 0:00

That's another reason why I try to talk slowly because if I try to talk, normally, I might not get my word out. And I never lost the fact of what I wanted to say it was always the enunciating part, you just work on it every day.

Eric Jackson 0:17

And I noticed that I'm like a gas tank at the beginning of the day I'm full. At the end of the day, if I talk normally, um, I might be done about five o'clock or so. And you'll hear my words for a little bit, and you can hear my voice get a little bit, the volume will go down, they'll just get weaker. And I just wanted to control that day by day. I didn't speak at all until I'm speaking to you tonight.

Bill Gasiamis 0:51

So you made sure that the battery was full when we got together?

Eric Jackson 0:57

Yes.

Intro 1:01

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

Bill Gasiamis 1:08

Hello, everybody. Welcome to the Recovery after Stroke podcast. If you are a stroke survivor with a story to share about your stroke experience, come join me on the show. The interviews are not scripted, you do not have to plan for them.

Bill Gasiamis 1:28

All you need to do to qualify as a stroke survivor who wants to share your story in the hope that it will help somebody else who is going through something similar. If you are a researcher who wants to share the findings of a recent study, or you are looking to recruit people into your studies, you may also wish to reach out and be a guest on my show.

Bill Gasiamis 1:46

If you have a commercial product that you would like to promote that is related to supporting stroke survivors to recover. There is also a path for you to join me on the show for a sponsored episode. Just go to recoveryafterstroke.com/contact, fill out the form explaining briefly which category you belong to, and I will respond with more details about how we can connect via Zoom.

Introduction - Aphasia Recovery



Bill Gasiamis 2:12

Now this is episode 268. And my guest today is Eric Jackson, who experienced an ischemic stroke 10 years ago. And amongst overcoming the physical deficits, he has also had to overcome aphasia. Now in this discussion, Eric demonstrates how far stroke survivors can come after a decade of recovery. And Eric does a lovely job of explaining how he still needs to manage his deficits and energy levels. Eric Jackson, welcome to the podcast.

Eric Jackson 2:44

Thank you very much, Bill has been looking forward to this all week.

Bill Gasiamis 2:47

Well, I'll be looking forward to having you as well thank you so much for deciding to connect and to be on the show. Tell me a little bit about what happened to you.

Eric Jackson 2:56

It was March of 2013. I was watching the NCAA Tournament, Best Basketball, and Final Four. And I wanted a bathroom. And just when I was about to come out, I started throwing up and did not know what it was. Initially, I thought it was food poisoning. And even though I've never had food poisoning before. After I stopped doing that, I just felt very, very weak.

Eric Jackson 3:01

I think it is maybe about three minutes to last doing that. And I crawled the bed and went to sleep at night. It wasn't until the next morning that I rolled out of bed. And I put my feet on the ground. And I realized that my strength and balance

was not there.

Eric Jackson 3:59

And then when I finally stood up, I remember just taking steps to my left because my whole right side I had no balance, no strength, no nothing. And I tried to just talk and I never lost where I wanted to stay. You just couldn't understand it. And now this is the part where I've told some people, some people I haven't but I did not go to the ER right away.

Bill Gasiamis 4:34

It's a very common thing. You're very normal. It's what most of us did because we're working out in our minds that it's anything but something serious.

Stroke symptoms and diagnosis of Eric Jackson

Eric Jackson 4:50

I'll test it out here. I didn't know really what it was. Of course, in my mind, I'm thinking maybe You know, the next day it will go away. And of course, the next day it didn't go away. And I found out about 36 hours until I went to the ER. And another check on the list. I drove myself to the ER, Man, I know I shouldn't have done that. But that now,

Bill Gasiamis 5:21

Yeah, it was efficient. It was easy. You didn't have to ring anybody didn't have to pay for an ambulance. Yeah, makes sense.

Eric Jackson 5:30

And not that it makes a difference. But the hospital I went to, might be a mile and a half from my house. But I know that that makes no difference. But when I finally got there, speaking to the check-in woman, I tried to tell her exactly what was happening. And she was great because somehow she pretty much deciphered.

You know what I said. And so I got admitted, they did all bunch a test. I remember he got there early morning, eight o'clock or so, and looked at it, they did a bunch of tests, and doctors came back. And he just said to me if you had a stroke, and I did not react whatsoever. I just remember him telling me that we were going to do some more tests, which we did. And it was about, say three, or Phil said about

four o'clock when everything ended.

And turns out that I was also diagnosed with diabetes, which I probably had maybe a year or two before I had the neuropathy in my foot. But never got it checked out. Didn't think it was you know, serious. But I remember him saying that we can do more tests now. Or you can come back tomorrow, and we can continue to test.

And stubborn me. That's all I needed to hear. So I went home, came back the next day, and continued to test. And so but everything as far as myself having a stroke. I mean, I was overweight, I had high cholesterol, I had high blood pressure. So you can say something was going to happen. It just happened to be that.

Bill Gasiamis 7:31

I'm curious about that when they diagnosed the stroke. What condition were you in? Then they said you can go home if you need to. I don't understand that if they've what type of stroke was it?

Eric Jackson 7:46

ischemic stroke, stroke, blood, blood cocked to the head. And I agree with you, Bill. I mean, when he said those magic words, everything else did not matter to me because I was there for about eight hours though. I've never been to the patient in the hospital. So I guess eight hours was enough for me. But yeah, my my mindset was there. But I think getting home and going back to the next day was in my mind better and better for me, even though probably wasn't better for me. But are they treating it?

Bill Gasiamis 8:26

How did they treat it? Did they get rid of the clock? What happened to the clock?

Eric Jackson 8:31

Well, I forget The Drudge to the drug when you do. I yeah, I didn't get that because sucks that I was about 36 hours before after I had my stroke. I don't know if you can still get that admitted then. But that did not come up at all. Just all the tests. And you know, my blood pressure was I remember, I remember looking at my blood pressure and it was like one 190 over like 110 And when I was released, it went down to like 170 over maybe 90 or so. So I don't know the indication of okay, he doesn't have to stay overnight to continue to test now. But that's what happened.

Bill Gasiamis 9:27

That's so strange. So when you were when you were going to the toilet, did you have nausea? Did you feel nauseated or were you to the toilet to do what you had to do and then all of a sudden you just out of nowhere threw up? How did that happen?

Eric Jackson 9:46

A lot. I was basically about to exit the bathroom. And then I got the feeling and I just went back to the toilet and started throwing up. But before that no Oh, no, not no notice it No, no, nothing. No indication whatsoever until that exact moment.

Bill Gasiamis 10:09

were you living at home with somebody? When, when that happens?

Eric Jackson 10:14

No, I was living alone. Same as right now. But I was living alone. Nobody was with me at the time.

Bill Gasiamis 10:22

Nobody to bug you and get you to the hospital sooner. Exactly

Eric Jackson 10:26

that they should have been there.

Bill Gasiamis 10:30

Fair enough. What kind of work were you doing?

Eric Jackson 10:34

Well, in March of 2,003rd, the year before May of 2012, I was working for Time Warner Cable, and we got laid off at that time. So pretty much took off the summer, I remember saying I was going to take my severance package and enjoy my summer, but the winter not so much. But then the next spring in March, that's when they happened to I was unemployed at the time.

Bill Gasiamis 11:07

Okay. So you've gone to the hospital, they've sent you home, and you went back the next day for tests? Did those tests reveal anything that required you to have a hospital stay?

Eric Jackson 11:25

You know what I'm gonna say no because I was there all day. And I think at the end of the day, they were already setting up my physical therapy along with my speech therapy. And that started. If that was like, say, a Monday that started maybe two days later. And of course, the medication that I was going to take was also going to be started that same day as well.

Aphasia recovery and rehabilitation



Bill Gasiamis 11:57

So you're going now it's the second day, and they've set up your physical therapy and speech therapy? Which physical deficits did you have? What did you have to overcome?

Eric Jackson 12:08

My whole right side was gone as far as any type of balance, or strength. So that that was that was a one as far as the physical part. Nothing, nothing on my left side, just to that effect on my right side. And then also my speech, it was, not as good as it is right now. I still don't think it's that good. But the speech therapy was back to square one, it was all the exercises that you probably did as a child, and I couldn't do it then. So it was gonna be interesting to attempt it, then. But those two things were the affected things I had to rehab.

Bill Gasiamis 12:56

How did you get to and back home from the hospital after the second visit? Did you have to drive again?

Eric Jackson 13:04

I was hoping you're going to skip that. I did drop that. That second day. I did drive there. And I did drive back.

Bill Gasiamis 13:13

Wow, that's amazing. I mean, it's amazing that they lifted to you. I get it that you've had a stroke, you don't understand the seriousness of it. All those things are quite common, and they're very normal. And it's still shocking to hear that. I drove myself to the hospital for one of the incidents that I had as well.

Bill Gasiamis 13:35

I don't know about it. Like, I know that that happens. What's interesting is that the hospital, and the doctors just kind of allowed it to happen as well. They just went along with it. After somebody has visited with a stroke, they send you home. And then they said just come back tomorrow. And you know, they didn't ask you how you were going to do that. They knew you had deficits.

Eric Jackson 14:01

What were the last three to look at a broken arm? Yeah, that was not a stroke. You know what? I think what? What kills that is what I did. And I didn't have to do that, that that was all me that was just stubborn me as far to do where I should do. And I didn't.

Bill Gasiamis 14:27

Yeah, well, okay. Well, it worked out. Well. You got to the hospital twice. And how long did you stay in rehab?

Eric Jackson 14:36

Well, what happened first was, I wasn't working at the time. It took me about two or three days to get my you know, my insurance, okay to do rehab, and speech and physical therapy both started things the same day. I remember doing physical therapy in the morning.

Eric Jackson 15:00

And luckily speech within the next building, which was like, you know, 200 feet over, and I walked to do speech therapy. And I did both of them for, I'm gonna say about two months. And that's when my insurance ran out.

Eric Jackson 15:19

But at that time, what I was doing for physical therapy was all the computer exercises as far as balancing, and not much walking. But more balancing exercises. And after two months of that, not that I felt, you know, great to walk around.

Eric Jackson 15:44

But I felt enough to continue what I wanted to do, as far as speech therapy, exercises as far as even Google Voice, and a lot of tongue twisters. words with the same letter. And I remember telling her at the beginning of each exercise, like, I couldn't do this before, I don't know how good way to do this now.

Eric Jackson 16:12

But after the speech therapy ended, my thought process would just get a newspaper or magazine, and I just read it out loud. And that was my speech therapy. As far as my physical therapy, I went to a community college, which had a track, and I would just have one lap around the track. And it would take me about maybe 12 minutes to finish.

Eric Jackson 16:39

I was tired, I was sweating. But my mindset was, was one day at a time. I'm going to do this one day at a time. And so both speech therapy and physical therapy, look, it was a it was a springtime, and I had all summer to do this. And that's exactly what I did. Everything was trying to get better every day. And I think that I did that. During my self-therapy, if you will.

Bill Gasiamis 17:09

It sounds like you did a fantastic job. You so matter of fact, this happened, I'm going to do that that happened, I'm going to do this. This has gone away, I'm going to do this to fix it. Was anyone supporting you? Were you being guided by anyone? How are we going through this alone?

Eric Jackson 17:31

There, nobody was necessarily guiding me. But I did have friends that I eventually told that you know you know, a good support system. You know, I would it would be more of I would tell them what I'm doing. And they might, I might talk to them at the end of the day. And I said, Did you do this to do that? And I said yes.

And that's sort of how I kind of roll anyway. But I mean, once I told my uncle and aunt who live like two miles down the road, and certain friends that I told them,

they chimed in on me. They didn't forget about me. I didn't tell you know, 100 people, but you know, it was a select few. But I had a good support system.

Bill Gasiamis 18:22

The timing, as far as your work was concerned seemed to be decent, where you weren't working, you had received a severance package. So now you've got time to yourself. So that came in at the right time? Did you eventually move through the recovery and get to a stage where you started to reconsider work and go back to work? What happened after the therapy?

Eric Jackson 18:48

Well, what happened? Not, I'm gonna say it was about maybe maybe two years as far as my therapy. And I had, I remember an appointment with my cardiologist. And I remember telling him that I'd like to go back to work.

Eric Jackson Dealing with speech impediments

Eric Jackson 19:08

And because I didn't know if there were any rules or anything like that as far as what to do. And he just turned to me and said, you said how do you feel? I said I feel fine. He said I'll write you a little note that you're good to go.

Eric Jackson 19:22

But you have to promise me that you work part-time. So that was a deal. So that's what I did. I there's an enterprise we're in a car right down the street for me. They advertised the job, basically a prep job to get the big ticket, and get the cars already prepped for for renting, and I applied. I got the job. And it was about about 20 hours a week.

Eric Jackson 19:50

And of course, before that, I'm still on SSDI Social Security Disability Insurance. It worked out with my income requirements. And so that was my first job. From full-time time Time Warner had about three, a three-year gap.

Eric Jackson 20:10

But you know, you do enough and you think that you can do something else and you know waking up and, you know, doing your rehab, that takes about maybe 30

minutes, 45 minutes, and then you have the whole rest of the day. And so that's when I did have the appointment with my cardiologist and he said, you know, how do you feel exhausted? I feel fine. That was the goal for me.

Bill Gasiamis 20:36

Yeah, well, that's good. Sounds like you did give it plenty of time to get back to work. Three years of looking after yourself getting yourself ready and fit and overcoming your deficits. How long did you feel like your speech deficit was way better than what to begin? So you would have been feeling like you weren't communicating well, but at some stage, you might have felt, I'm communicating well, now, how long elapsed until you got to that stage?

Eric Jackson 21:10

When I first started that enterprise, I think I learned how to control my speech. What I would do and what I'm what I do try to do still now is to talk slower than I usually did. So that way, I can enunciate better. And you don't say all the time, I'm sorry, what did you say? So I made sure that I constantly tried to talk slowly enough to enunciate the words.

Eric Jackson 21:45

And at at the time, or maybe right after that, I would speak to somebody, and when I said I had a stroke, and it affected my speech, they said I can I can, I can see that a little bit. But I've thought maybe you just had an accent or, you know, an accent or something. They wouldn't know what happened until I told them. And that's still today, the best compliment when they say I wouldn't even guess that you had a stroke. And that's, that's, that's the best compliment.

Bill Gasiamis 22:20

Yeah. When you're, as you speak, right now. What was the problem with the speech that you had? Some people who don't get the word have aphasia, for example, they can make the word come out of their head, for example, there's a disconnect between the mouth and the thought of the word, what was your specific problem with your speech?

Eric Jackson 22:47

Mine was just unnecessary enunciating words, it could be the simplest words, and I might stutter, or it might take me four or five attempts to say, and that was, that was my, you know, speech impediment. And it still is. That's another reason why I

try to talk slow, because if I try to talk, you know, normally, I might not get my word out.

Eric Jackson 23:16

And I never lost the fact of what I wanted to say it was always the enunciating part. And just, you just work on it every day. And I noticed that I'm looking at the gas tank, like the beginning of the day, you know, I'm full.

At the end of the day, if I talk normally, um, I might be done about five o'clock or so. And you'll hear my words for a little bit, and you can hear my voice getting a little bit, the volume will go down, they'll just get weaker. And I just wanted to control that day by day. I didn't speak at all until I'm speaking to you tonight.

Bill Gasiamis 24:02

So you made sure that the battery was full when we got together?

Eric Jackson 24:07

Yes.

Intro 24:07

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

Intro 24:32

If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation. Stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you, it's called Seven Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Your Stroke.

Intro 24:51

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, add to the website now, recoveryafterstroke.com, and download the guide. It's free.

Bill Gasiamis 25:10

Fantastic, mate, thank you. This happened 10 years ago for you and you are 10 years out, what is your right side like now? Are there any challenges with the physical part of your body?

Aphasia recovery, TBI, strength, and balance



Eric Jackson 25:29

Well, now I gained, let's say, most of my strength back on my right side. When I was rehabbing, I would do all right-side exercises, I wouldn't even use my left side, did that for maybe, about a year. And I remember one time, I was feeling pretty good, you know, lost some weight, I knew I had some strength back. And I went to the bench. And I put on about, I think I put 3 pins on there and put it up three times. And I was good and I've never done that again.

Eric Jackson 26:13

But that's probably where I left off, you know, 10-12 years ago. But now I mean, walking, you can still see a slight limp when I do walk. But I'm comfortable and walking now. It took me about a year to do stairs. I'm comfortable with that right now. So everything was with strength and balance.

And still is, there are some times where I will pick up something with my right hand, you know, still do a little shake, I still have specificity in my walking in, you know certain tasks. But like, for saving, I'll just do my left hand up, I won't do my right hand at all. Did you have to turn to do that? But balance and strength were

the from the get-go. That was what I had to deal with.

Bill Gasiamis 27:13

And is that energy battery also makes your deficits worse, at the end of the day for your right side, do you also notice that you'll limp it gets a little worse and your hand spasticity gets a little worse when you're out of energy.

Eric Jackson 27:30

I don't think physically, I don't think it affects the end of the day if he steals my speech. And now I don't know if I should talk more during the day, or keep doing what I'm doing is to hard balance. But I'm gonna stay with keep what I'm what I'm doing. But as far as far as my balance and strength, when I do walk, or I do work out. I still feel that my strength is almost back. And I don't worry about any deficits as far as physical deficits.

Bill Gasiamis 28:12

That's interesting. A lot of people will say that all the deficits get worse at the end of the day. And that's what I noticed. But, interestingly, yours don't. And that's great that it doesn't that maybe because

Eric Jackson 28:25

I tried to work out maybe the bidding beading of the day. Oh, maybe I don't notice it that much. Perhaps it would if I you know, tried to do a workout at about eight o'clock PM, that will happen. But I make sure that either I'll work out in the morning or I might not work out that day. But I've always tried to do with at least before noon anyway.

Bill Gasiamis 28:50

So today, you've saved your voice for me. But what does that mean during the day? Does that mean you don't go anywhere, anywhere where you have to talk? You don't ring people? How do you avoid talking to people for the entire day to get to the end of the day and be fresh?

Eric Jackson 29:08

Well, today Bill, I did not have to go out, go shopping, or meet with anybody to go to work. So when I woke up you know, I worked out. I did some things in my office in my house. I listened to music most of the day. And I said I'm not the only time I talked I was texting you using Google Voice to certain people. But other than that, I said if I have to go about an hour, I'm gonna save it all for Bill.

Bill Gasiamis 29:40

All right, thank you. Appreciate that. So what's life like now? It sounds like life's okay. Are you in a different job? Are you still doing the car preparation job? How did you move on from that? After that first sort of three to five years.

Eric Jackson 30:01

Well, there have been jobs in between that, just to fast forward to right now, I'm working at a rehabilitation hospital off the front desk. And the reason why I'm there. It's a team hospital that I rehab that, you know, three, four years ago at the gym, and maybe last summer. So I said, You know what, I just want to get my foot in the door.

Eric Jackson 30:31

And I think the best way is to go to that rehabilitation hospital. And luckily, they're always hiring. And there was a job advertised for the front desk, and, you know, got the interview, and looks like I got the job, been there for about a year. And that's the best part as far as everybody's there. Well, not everybody, but when people are there to visit family or you know, someone who is rehabbing there, I feel like I have a connection with them.

Eric Jackson 31:09

Because I went through the same thing. It could be different. We do have a TBI word. But they might be, they might be rehabbing a broken hip. But whatever it might be, I feel like I do have a connection with them. Every person I don't say that, you know, had a stroke, and we get into a conversation. But there are there are some that I do.

Eric Jackson 31:34

And just a conversation back and forth, whether what they went through or what their family members are going through to best partner they and it kind of leads me toward being more of a stroke advocate or, you know, parties or TBI advocate. And so that's what I'm doing now, about 2025 hours a week. I work there tomorrow morning. And that is my path right now.

Using personal experience to connect with

others

Bill Gasiamis 32:09

That's a good path. The good thing about that is that if you do get involved in a conversation with somebody, and you do mention the fact that you had a stroke. And you do mention the fact that it was 10 years ago. What I hope it does is provide hope for the family or for the person that there is this possibility of progression.

Bill Gasiamis 32:30

And for things to improve, even though their loved one may have had a different stroke or may have a different deficit, or whatever it is, at least it offers some hope that here is Eric, you know, he had a stroke when he was 44. And then he had some tough times he had to overcome certain deficits and challenges.

Bill Gasiamis 32:56

And then 10 years later, here he is in a position where he is working in the space, which is important to him. The evolution of stroke has this story that he can show and can tell people that you can fight for your ability to get back to work to life to have something meaningful in your day. It can look however you want it to look and you can choose what you've chosen.

Eric Jackson 33:34

I agree with everything you said, Bill.

Bill Gasiamis 33:36

Yeah, that's a great thing. And it does create a connection. And because you understand and it has, you're able to have empathy. And you're able to know what people are going through and what might be on their minds and what might be troubling them. And that's an excellent position for you to be in right at the front door when you're almost the first person that they see when

Eric Jackson 34:04

I am the first person. Yeah, I am the first person they see when they walk into the hospital and it's a good thing.

Bill Gasiamis 34:12

Probably the last person on the way out as well.

Eric Jackson 34:15

Exactly. Exactly.

Bill Gasiamis 34:18

That's fantastic. So that organization that you work with, did you use that story to help get you the job? Did you say by the way, do you know that I was a patient here? And I think you guys are fantastic and all that type of thing.

Eric Jackson 34:36

That did come up. What happened is I was at I was in a waiting room at the time was maybe a small space that maybe two or three chairs. It's to prove it's improved now but I was just waiting for my contact to come out. And what happened is the gentleman who was the manager of the gym that I rehabilitated that he walked out because he was, I think it was the person who was taken over his job.

Eric Jackson 35:11

He was walking around the hospital. So I was talking to him for a little bit. And as I was talking to him, my contact walked out. And so I'm saying, boy, she is to me with talking with the matter of the gym. So he must know him somehow. So we went back we interviewed interview was fine. And then two things I said, Well, I did work out at the second-floor gym to rehabilitate it.

Eric Jackson 35:42

And then my ace in the hole, is my uncle has been volunteering there for about 19 years. Wow. And, and I said, Oh, you might know my uncle. And she goes, Oh, who was it? And I said, it's curl, then also, oh, my god, curl. We love to curl this and that. And, you know, in my mind, I said it. This is over it. So I pretty much got the job.

Sharing stroke survivor stories for hope and help

Bill Gasiamis 36:11

Perfect, I would use that too. Especially Uncle Carl was a good person to suggest and he wasn't being a pain in the butt. Otherwise, you have to distance yourself from him. But never. Yeah, I love it. Well, I think that's the beauty of it, right? You

can still be yourself, you can still find a way to get over the line to achieve your goals to do your thing. So what's the plan? Do you see another role for yourself in that organization at some stage? Or are you just happy doing what you're doing?

Eric Jackson 36:51

Initially, when I got the job, I said, I would like to, you know, maybe have another job and do time with them as maybe some type of a speaker or just an advocate for you know, for stroke itself. I have done is I have I did speak once, at the activity night during the thick of 6:30-7:30. And I met the one, who runs the who is in charge of activities.

Eric Jackson 37:30

I asked him can I speak one night when the TBI patients were there, usually, it was a game night for playing Yahtzee or whatever. So one night, I went out there and spoke for about 10 minutes. And everybody seemed very pleased. I haven't done it again yet. But that's something along the lines that I'd like to do. And also the same hospital that I initially went to when I had my stroke.

Eric Jackson 38:02

And I did participate in stroke meetings right after my stroke when I had it. They discontinued it for whatever reason, whether it was money or participation, but they have they have thick necks next week, they're doing the groups again, and on Thursday, I think it was Thursday. I'm going to participate again in a shrink meeting there.

Eric Jackson 38:33

And so again, get the ball rolling and do something even for your podcasts. I think I just went online and typed stroke podcast, and yours came up and you know, submit submitted by information and you got back to me. And I was pretty shocked. And I said I'm doing this once we can get a time down. And so bits and pieces like that as far as what my path, I think I want to be as far as what I'm going to do in due time.

Bill Gasiamis 39:07

So it sounds like you have decided to make a point of helping in the area by advocating and sharing our story. What are the benefits of sharing your story? What do you feel is the reason why people should share their stroke story?

Eric Jackson 39:26

Maybe the number one reason is is help is helping and hope. Like you said people like hearing stories. And when they do hear a particular story. It might help someone it might not help them but maybe they'll tell somebody might help another person and just an avalanche effect. That's what I hope I'm going to do as far as to have my story out.

Eric Jackson 39:54

And you know, I would love for you know hundreds of people and you know that A couple of days to come to me and say, Well, I heard your story, I heard your journey. And that's my mindset right now. It's, it's great to tell my story after 10 years, I figure if I can make it 10 years. I don't know if I'm an expert, but I have an experience of 10 years of being a stroke survivor.

Eric Jackson 40:25

So I want to, I want to tell that story. And I want to help as many people's problems as possible. And then I want them to, you know, have that in their mind that, you know, I can do this too. Or maybe they're, you know, brother or sister, whoever it is, you can do that as well.

Bill Gasiamis 40:46

You're an expert after 10 years, you're the expert. Recovery? Absolutely. Yes, no doubt about it, your experience. You've lived with yourself for 10 years, so you know what it's like, and you can speak on that. And you're a very credible person to, to have that platform, you know, to be able to stand in front of people.

Bill Gasiamis 41:12

And what's interesting is that many stroke survivors who come on the podcast, tell me that they get something out of it, they feel good about sharing their story, and it helps to get them something off their chest. But then what's interesting, Eric, is I get a lot of people contacting me through the YouTube channel, or my website, or Instagram, or social media saying, you know, thank you for the work that you're doing.

Bill Gasiamis 41:41

Thanks for the episode that helped me. I listened to 260 episodes so far. And they're not all different. They're very, very similar. But every person is different, every person's unique, experience offers something different for every person. So the more people we can get onto a podcast, the more people who share this story.

Bill Gasiamis 42:08

It doesn't matter how minor, or major, where the stroke was what it affected, the more chance that we have of somebody out there, finding the one that they resonate with, and then going, that explains it all. Okay, I appreciate that. Or ik, if he can be like that, I can be like that. I don't know the type of people who look up to me, I don't know if I don't know the demographic or people who relate to me.

Bill Gasiamis 42:37

But hopefully, I found the demographic of people that will relate to you, and then they'll come then they'll go, well, Eric's my kind of guy, you know, I can be like Eric, and I'm going to follow his example. And then take my recovery to the next level by going to the gym every day, in the morning, so that I'm not tired at the end of the day, or I'm going to save my voice for special occasions.

Bill Gasiamis 43:05

That's a great thing. I mean, I never thought about it like that. But I used to save myself for special occasions usually going to a party or whatever. But I would give myself time the next day. If I had a party to go to I'd go about my business as normal.

Bill Gasiamis 43:23

And then we'd get to the party. And then the next day, I would have nothing to do so that I didn't have to be hungover. Not that I drank, but like stroke hangover and then get through my day. You know, so that was my strategy to make sure that I got there. And I was I was able to fully participate.

Eric Jackson 43:55

Yes. Then when I did find your podcast, I listened to I don't know if it was last week or maybe two weeks ago. But I think his name was Chris. He was the one who got into a car accident in Princeton, New Jersey. And I listened to what he went through as far as you know, the I'm not gonna get into it, but the whole school thing and he was in a coma and then graduated high school and then graduated college and got two degrees.

Eric Jackson 44:27

And I'm listening to it I said, I can't follow this. This guy's amazing as far as what he did, but every TBI is different. Every rehab is so unique, that you read like says it's not a broken arm, there's no there's no formula for it. And once you get your

groove as far as what to do, and it might not be, you know, a medical journal that you look through that You know, does the trick, it might be your own little thing combined with, you know, law knowledge that you have. And you know what, what Chris is I thought was amazing. And every day you just learn how to deal with the rehab, and hopefully, you get better.

Bill Gasiamis 45:17

Christopher Dietrich was episode 260. He didn't have a stroke, but he had a car accident, which gave him a traumatic brain injury. However, there are a lot of similarities between recovery from a traumatic brain injury and stroke. It's the same kind of challenges people face. And yeah, and what was interesting about Chris is that he decided that he was going to leave his home country and go overseas and live overseas.

Bill Gasiamis 45:48

And I remember when I was interviewing him, I said, you went on your own. I kind of felt a little bit like, wow, that's a big deal that you're unwell. Nonetheless, you went overseas and he went and got a job. And he did all the things that he was going to do. He made it sound so effortless. I know. It wasn't. But he made it sound so effortless.

Eric Jackson 46:12

He did.

Bill Gasiamis 46:12

Yeah. But I know it wasn't I don't want people who are listening, who go back and watch episode 260. To feel like he didn't have anything wrong with him or everything was easy. It wasn't. But that's how he reflects on it. He reflects on it. Like it was nothing.

Eric Jackson 46:30

I was just more impressed than anything else.

Bill Gasiamis 46:32

Yeah. He's a great guy. He contacted me for the same reason, right? He said that it was time for him to start sharing his story. And it's time for him to start telling people about what he went through what he overcame and what's possible. And that's perfect. You know, he was 18. But to him, he was 18. So he missed out on a lot of those parts of, you know, the early 20s when we're running amok and

enjoying life to the full, he missed out on a lot of that.

Bill Gasiamis 46:32

But it didn't get in the way, it still seemed like he went out of his way to get to the point where he was going to do everything. That right, that was on his mind that he needed to get done. It was a great story. Yeah. I hope well, clearly, it inspired you. And I know there was another comment about it as well on the YouTube channel.

Bill Gasiamis 47:31

And I imagine that for every comment that people make, I imagine there are another 10 or 20 comments that people don't make who feel the same way. And that's the reason why the podcast is so great because it's not essential to your comment. But I know that just by the law of averages when people are commenting.

Bill Gasiamis 47:54

One or two people, I know that many, many, many others are getting positively impacted. Now, sure, if anyone's listening to this episode, they are getting positively impacted, and they love this story from Eric, leave a comment in the YouTube comments. Let us know. Let's leave more than two comments on this episode. This time, that'd be fantastic.

Eric Jackson 48:17

If you want the best to be about the first couple of days go right ahead. I've been through it before the first couple of days. As far as what I did. What not to do?

Bill Gasiamis 48:31

Yeah. Well, you did all the wrong things. But you didn't know there were the wrong things.

Eric Jackson 48:37

Well, no. That's not what some people said.

Bill Gasiamis 48:42

About they said you should have done better?

Driving after a stroke and lifestyle changes for Eric Jackson



Eric Jackson 48:45

They said you should have you should have gone immediately you should have called you know, 911. And I didn't say anything because they weren't wrong. Just sat there and took it, you know, didn't know

Bill Gasiamis 49:00

how do you know, I got told the same thing you shouldn't have driven here. I know. But I had a stroke, but I'm not thinking clearly. All I know is I need help. I don't know how I'm going to get help. All I know is I need help. And I'm going to go where the help is.

Eric Jackson 49:17

Exactly, yes.

Bill Gasiamis 49:19

I drove about. I reckon I drove about. In miles. I think I drove about three or four miles to the hospital as well. Okay. I knew where it was. I can't remember getting there. I don't remember. I can't remember how I got there. I don't know. There's nothing in my memory about how I drove my car to the hospital.

Bill Gasiamis 49:44

I know I got there, I know where I parked. I parked in the illegal parking zone. I called my wife walked in and told them I was having a stroke. They didn't believe

me, I argued with them, "I am" I gave them my name, and they finally looked up my history, and then they admitted me.

Bill Gasiamis 50:06

It was the third bleed that I was having. And, but I can't remember how I got there. And okay. It's not the right thing, but it worked out. And I'm glad that it worked out. And I'm glad I didn't hurt anyone or me. But it's, it's not what I was thinking at the time. I wasn't thinking of anything like that.

Eric Jackson 50:27

Yes. I mean, I can immediately jump to, Hey, it's 10 years later, I'm here. You know, forget what happened. The first off, you know, a week or two. I'm here. Yep. That's it. And, hopefully, I can like, you know, change your mindset. And they could agree with me, and then we can we can go on from there.

Bill Gasiamis 50:47

Yeah. It worked out what they said. I think the people who say that are concerned about our well-being and other people's well-being they Sure, sure. Well, you could have hurt yourself. I know. I could have bought it didn't. Yes. Let's move on.

Eric Jackson 51:03

That exact that's exactly my attitude, whether they agree with it or not that that exactly is.

Bill Gasiamis 51:09

And in the same position. What's strange is many people make the same decision. The number of stroke survivors that I've spoken to who said they drove themselves to the hospital because they didn't want to call an ambulance. They didn't think it was that serious. Well, how could you Nobody's expecting to have a stroke. Right?

Eric Jackson 51:28

I mean, I didn't know it was an actual stroke until the doctor told me. So I remember telling, telling a friend of mine, because I was gonna travel to New Jersey, that weekend just to visit in our room and tell him that, I probably just said, I was not feeling too good. Because I didn't know it was an actual stroke, then. But yeah, I didn't know until the doctor told me. And then that's when everything started.

Bill Gasiamis 51:57

So now how about all the other underlying causes? Has everything settled down regarding diabetes, and high blood pressure? Where are all your other little things near? Where are they?

Eric Jackson 52:11

Well, when I had my stroke, I was about 270 pounds. Right now, I just weighed myself yesterday. 218 pounds. So we got that under control. And that's the lowest weight that I've been since my sophomore year in high school, I believe. So check, check that off, and I'm gonna keep that up. My blood pressure was like 190 over 120.

Eric Jackson 52:42

It was peeking at the machine while I was lying down. Today, I'm still on blood pressure medication, but it's constantly like 120 over 80. So, I got that checked off. And my diabetes, I remember my first seat check was I think it was the 11 or so. And now it's right at seven. I'm having trouble getting it below seven because I know that I cheat too much. But from, you know, from 11, downtown to the seven that's a great accomplishment.

Weight loss and nutrition

Eric Jackson 53:23

And I don't have any, you know, physical effects from having type two diabetes. And you know, the weight loss still definitely helped my cholesterol check from my last blood work about six months ago. You know, that was cholesterol was very good. I mean, right now, I don't eat many fried foods at all, every once in a blue moon. So all those factors have a stroke as far as being obese, having high blood pressure, and having high cholesterol. I made sure I took care of them.

Bill Gasiamis 54:04

Weight loss is making a massive difference in every part of life. How you feel specifically and then also how it impacts your body and how it impacts the blood sugar levels. Going to the gym is also helping your blood sugar levels.

Bill Gasiamis 54:18

As you're pumping iron, you're getting all of that sugar, all that energy out of your body and the body doesn't have to work so hard to break it down and

process it. So that's all beneficial. And you lost a significant amount of weight. You must feel lighter on your feet and more comfortable in yourself.

Eric Jackson 54:42

Yeah, that felt great. I think it's two years ago, I had my 30th high school reunion. And you know, everybody said that I look great. And I'm thinking of the same way I was in high school there. years ago, not too many people can say that. And that was two years ago, and I think I might have like, slipped off five pounds since then. So I have a formula as far as my diet and working out that I'm going to stick with and, you know, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Bill Gasiamis 55:22

Is that the case of your success? Just being vigilant about your process, you're the way that you go about your day looking after yourself and everything?

Eric Jackson 55:32

Yes. I mean, there. It's like, don't don't get me wrong, Bill, I'll cheat. I mean, there's gonna, you know, sometimes it will be that Snickers bar, and I'll have that happen, you know. But, like, like, like this past week, I think I had like, three consecutive days where I didn't snack, I didn't eat late. And everything contributed, I think I lost maybe like three pounds in three days.

Eric Jackson 56:00

And with me, the thing is, don't get cocky and go out and get a, you know, five slices of pizza and eat that. And so that's the balance. I mean, I will have more days out of the week, if I do well. I'm fine with that. I don't have to have everything written down.

Eric Jackson 56:22

And, you know, seven days a week, do this and do that. I mean, I can tell, I can tell. And, you know, I'll always tell you we've moved my clothes, I can tell. And that's, it's a good barometer because I had to give away most of my clothes. After all, they were too big. And I just had to buy all new clothes to, you know, fit the new me. And it was, it was a good thing. That's a good problem to have.

Bill Gasiamis 56:47

That's a great problem to have. So Snickers is your visor. If you come across a Snickers bar on a Saturday, which is your day off? You have to have it?

Eric Jackson 56:58

Ah, well, vices if I stay in the house, I don't I don't buy like sweets, for the most part. If I'm at a grocery store, and you know, I go down, you know, the wrong aisle it'd be bad. That's a thing. I try not to, you know, go someplace to buy something that might offset the diet. I tried to eat what's in the house. And if I stick with that, I'll be okay.

Bill Gasiamis 57:31

Yeah. I like that. Don't bring it home, therefore, you can't eat it. I like it. Yeah. I remember one of the worst things that I used to do as far as nutrition goes, which, I mean, I don't think it even comes under the word nutrition. Do I still love eating a Mars bar and having a can of Coca-Cola at the same time? I'm not sure. I think that that would be enough sugar to get me through the next three months these days. I mean, I didn't have anywhere near that.

Bill Gasiamis 58:03

That amount of sugar. I was so addicted. But you think about Mars bar, it must have 50 or 60 grams of sugar in it. And then a can of Coke, the same amount. I would use a can of Coke to wash down the Mars bar and all the stickiness and all that stuff. It was terrible. But amazing. It was amazing. Oh my gosh, it used to be my daily thing.

Bill Gasiamis 58:31

But of course, I would never do that. Now. I can't remember the last time I had a Mars bar. Alright. I don't think that I've had a can of Coke man for three years more, or any soda for that matter, any soda for at least three years.

Bill Gasiamis 58:48

And the last time I had soda even if it was three years ago, I probably only had a very small amount, you know, 100 meals or something? Just who knows? Whatever reason, because it was there. And it was my day off or something like that. And as far as five slices of pizza, I remember the old days when I would eat an entire pizza.

Eric Jackson 59:09

I'm glad you said that. Not me. Yeah, I'll just leave it at that

Bill Gasiamis 59:13

I would eat in a tire one entire big, massive pizza bought for myself. I'd go buy

one and just smash it. And now there's no way I could eat that much pizza. I don't understand where it used to go, Eric. I don't know where it went.

Eric Jackson 59:32

Yeah, I think that wasn't my process. But my process was I know where I'm going, I'm going to buy it. I'm going to eat it and then the next day I'll be better.

Bill Gasiamis 59:41

I was always worse the next day. But I never connected the two I never knew that the next day after eating. Something that I shouldn't have eaten was similar to a hangover from alcohol. I used to have after-effects, the day after I'd be bloated or, I wouldn't feel well, I was never very overweight. I was never above 210 pounds.

What has stroke taught Eric Jackson

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:09

But my biggest weight was probably about 210 pounds. So, you know, that was maybe my biggest way ever. So I was wondering whether or not you're comfortable, or not comfortable and will be able to share what stroke taught you.

Eric Jackson 1:00:35

Now, well 10 years ago, it taught me that it told me no have something to do every day, maybe wasn't like that before, you know, very, almost boring, go to work, come home, do whatever. Now it's wake up, and I have to rehab I want to get back to whatever normalcy is that most people, I guess, you know, complain about.

Eric Jackson 1:01:10

And so that was my mindset for a couple of years. You know, I see people do were up the stairs. And I said, Well, I'd like to do that in due time. And I would, I would see someone maybe run across the street. And I would say, I would like to do that, you know, someday. So I had I had, I had things to accomplish that I never thought of before the stroke.

Eric Jackson 1:01:37

So it was more or less a purpose of, you know, starting over again, square one, you know, I'm a little kid trying to walk again, you know, I'm trying to speak again. That's where my mindset was. And it still is today, because I'd like to do it.

I don't know what I can do to make my speech better. But maybe I'll maybe I'll find out.

Eric Jackson 1:02:01

And as far as maybe getting more strength back in my right side to do more exercises, maybe I'm going to I'm going to start yoga. And just to see if I can even improve on what I am right now. So even 10 years later, it's it's something to do. And so I just don't wake up and you know, do the normal things. It's always something to do.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:31

That's fantastic. So this is a similar kind of question, but it's different. In that, what would you say to somebody who's listening to this episode, who has just been through a stroke? Who's going through it now? What would you say to them, if they came across you? And you could tell they were doing hard and doing tough?

Eric Jackson 1:02:59

Well, like I said, every rehab process is different. It's unique. Everyone has their rehab process. And you have to think that it's, it's a marathon, it's not a sprint, you're not going to be AOK, three days later, it's going to take time, and it's going to take a lot of patience. And if you can still do that, you know in you is as long as you do what you want to do every day as far as Rehab Time is going to tell you a lot of things.

Eric Jackson 1:03:38

And after a certain time, I think I mean, you're going hopefully you're going to improve. And if you're going to improve that is going to greenlight you to do even more. And it's just going to, and that's and that's that was my mindset every day, every week, every month. I was like, You know what I'm going to do where I want to do, and it's going to take time. And again, a marathon, not a sprint, every day. Have your support system with you. And you know, it's difficult, but don't give up. I mean, don't give up.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:25

It sounds like you never had a deadline I'm going to, for example, run up the stairs by next week. Sounds like you never had a deadline. It sounds like you always had a goal and that you were just working towards it and you would give it

a try. And then if you didn't succeed, you would just work towards it and give it another try. Is that accurate? Is that how it was?

Eric Jackson 1:04:48

That's accurate. What happened is, going back to the enterprise job. Sometimes we'll deliver cars to a certain building and you I would work with a partner and and realize that we have to go up, you know, five steps. And I will go, oh, wow, I don't know if I can do that. As long as there was a real thing, I can do it.

Eric Jackson 1:05:11

And so, you know, 20, say 20 Steps went up, use a railing, I was okay. And I'm just thinking, you know, hopefully, maybe in a month or so, I can go up the steps without the real and just go very slow and not trip. And that's exactly what happened. And downstairs is even worse, but the same thing. It's, it's, it's a challenge to me.

Eric Jackson 1:05:38

That's what it was. As far as up the steps down the steps, hills stop and start to, you know, maneuver yourself. It was all a talent. It's something I didn't have, you know, back then. But I just said in time, I will. And yes, I never had a, you know, a deadline for something. I just said it will come in time.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:05

Hey Eric, thank you so much for reaching out. Deciding to share your story start being an advocate for stroke, and offer hope to other stroke survivors is appreciated. I enjoyed your story. And I wish you well, with everything going forward.

Eric Jackson 1:06:24

Thank you very much, Bill. I mean, I woke up and I said, I'm looking forward to this. And I had a great time. And it's very therapeutic to tell your story. And I hope people watch and hopefully, if I can reach one person that's good enough for me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:45

Man. Thank you. Once again.

Eric Jackson 1:06:48

Thank you very much, Bill.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:50

Thanks for joining us on today's episode. As always, to learn more about my guests, including links to their social media, and other pages, and to download a full transcript of the entire interview. Please go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:05

Thank you to all those people who have already left a review it means the world to me and you are helping others in need of this type of content to find it easier, and that is making their stroke recovery just that little bit better.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:20

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Intro 1:07:46

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Intro 1:08:03

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Intro 1:08:26

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Intro 1:08:48

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Intro 1:09:07

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