

Stroke & Heart Surgery Recovery - Misha Montana

Misha Montana was a single 31-year-old mum working in the adult film industry when she experienced an ischemic stroke which later revealed a PFO which was resolved by heart surgery.

Website

Instagram

Facebook

Highlights:

02:21 Introduction

05:54 Patent Foramen Ovale (PFO)

07:36 The Invisible Side Effects

12:55 Oblivious About Stroke

14:57 Stroke Statistics

20:41 Asking For Help

27:30 It's Okay Not To Be Okay

35:55 What's Happening Underneath

39:46 Parenting And Having A Stroke

48:06 The Three Bleeds

57:51 A Documentary About Misha Montana

1:12:21 Identity Crisis

1:20:37 Alcohol Problem

1:35:00 Take The Risk

Transcription:

Misha Montana 0:00

So I'm a single mom, I take care of my son exclusively. When I travel, thank God, my parents watch him. So when I was traveling and this particular incident, he was not with me. But that was like the hardest part about it, too, was being away from him then now for a week.

Misha Montana 0:22

And he has no idea what is going on. And I didn't want him to come to the hospital as much as that thought crosses your mind, where it's like, should I have him come to the hospital? Like what if I die? But then I answered that question. In my own mind, I wouldn't want him to see me in the hospital.

Intro 0:48

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

Bill Gasiamis 1:02

Hello, and welcome to another episode of the recovery after stroke podcast. Please comment, like and share this episode. Because that makes the algorithm on YouTube and Google push it out to more people looking for inspirational stories of recovery after stroke, especially when they're just starting out on their recovery journey and they're doing it tough, and they think that they're the only one and nobody else knows how to relate to them.

Bill Gasiamis 1:27

That's exactly why I started this podcast because I was missing this type of information when I was recovering, and my aim is to get it in front of as many stroke survivors and caregivers as I can, so that they can be inspired by all the amazing stories of recovery, resilience and overcoming stroke that my amazing and fabulous guests are sharing.

Bill Gasiamis 1:51

Now also, if you think the show deserves it, I'd love it if you left the show a five-star review. Now this will also help it rank better on search engines, and it will get it in front of more stroke survivors. So combined with leaving a comment liking and sharing, this should make a big difference to giving the show an opportunity to appear higher up in the rankings when people do searches, whether it's on their phone or their laptop or their iPad.

Introduction - Misha Montana



Bill Gasiamis 2:21

So go ahead, go to your favorite podcast app and share what the podcast means to you really will make a huge difference. Now, this is episode 199. My guest today is Misha Montana, a single mom who works in the adult film industry and experienced an ischemic stroke that may have been caused by a hole in the heart, also known as a PFO. Misha Montana. Welcome to the podcast.

Misha Montana 2:49

Thank you for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 2:51

My pleasure. Thank you for reaching out. Tell us a little bit about what happened to you.

Misha Montana 2:56

So I actually had a stroke, it was a year ago on April 14, 2021. I was in. There's a small town about two and a half hours outside of the city that I live in, which is Reno. It's this teeny tiny mountain town called Susanville, California. And I was out there. And about nine o'clock, I noticed that I lost all of the control of the right side of my body mostly my arm and hand and my entire face went out.

Misha Montana 3:37

And I couldn't talk at all. And I didn't realize at the time what exactly was going on. It's one of those situations or say I googled it and the first thing Google said was you're having a stroke and I thought Google was being a little bit dramatic. So I did not do anything. I thought I had like some kind of allergic reaction or ate

bad food somewhere because we're in like a super tiny town.

Misha Montana 4:08

And I went to sleep and didn't go to the hospital. The person I was with thought I was having a stroke and offered to take me to the hospital. And I thought that that was overkill. So I went to bed I woke up in the morning and I still had obviously the same symptoms and I noticed that my hand was getting tighter and like throbbing and I knew something was wrong at that point because it didn't go away.

Misha Montana 4:38

And so that's when the panic kind of sets in where you're like something is seriously wrong. So I actually drove myself to the hospital in Reno which was two and a half hours away.

Bill Gasiamis 4:50

Oh my gosh.

Misha Montana 4:53

With one hand driving and just stroking out the whole time. And I was panicking the whole time and then I knew like something's like seriously wrong. So I tried to get to the hospital as quickly as possible. And I walked in and it was COVID. So I had a mask on. And I took it off. And immediately they're calling the stroke codes over the intercom.

Misha Montana 5:19

And, even then I was like, are you sure it's stroke? I was 31 years old at the time. So I was like, I don't know why I would have a stroke. And what they ultimately determined was, I was in the hospital for almost a week, multiple CAT scans, MRIs different testings.

Misha Montana Had A Patent Foramen Ovale (PFO)

Misha Montana 5:43

The initial thought that they had was that it was COVID related. And after talking to different doctors, later on, I had the Pfizer COVID vaccine, the second dose seven days prior to the stroke. And now the theory is that I had a blood clot from

the vaccine that traveled to my heart, and I had a previously undiagnosed heart condition, I had a PFO.

Misha Montana 6:12

And it shot the clot to the left side of my brain and the brilliant neurologist that I had had noticed that that was indicative of having a PFO, which I never knew. And 25% of the population is also unaware that they have that same birth defect. So after I was out of the hospital, a month later, I ended up having heart surgery as well to fix that hole in my heart. So it was a very interesting couple of months, it's been a very interesting life post stroke period.

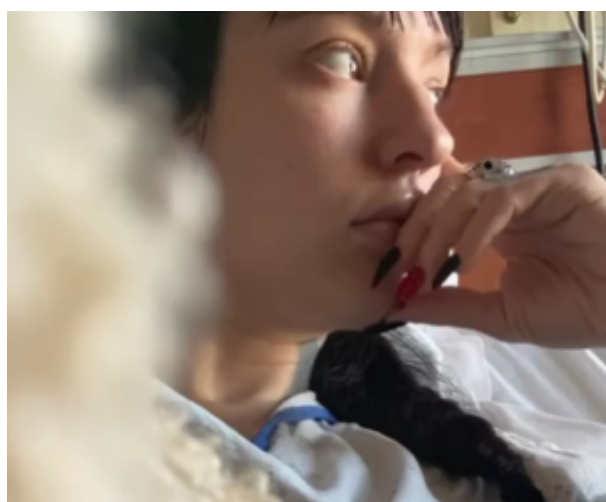
Bill Gasiamis 6:53

I love that you play it down. It's been an interesting couple of months or whatever. And I love how you play down. Google was wrong. I drove for two-and-a-half hours stroking out, you know.

Misha Montana 7:06

No big deal. Looking at it now to especially I mean, even immediately after like the magnitude of how serious that could have been. And what coz it is serious. I got so lucky. And that's all I can say about it. Like, I don't know, some people don't believe in luck or coincidences or chance. But like, I definitely believe that I was lucky.

Misha Montana Stroke And The Invisible Side Effects



Misha Montana 7:35

Because of the fact that I regained I'd say like 90% of my physical. My face, my

arm, my hand is operable. My speech came back for the most part, I stutter here and there and have different ailments that are permanent, like aphasia is the worst one that I have for sure. aphasia and depression. Those are the things that when people see you, and they're like, Oh, it's so great that you survived that stroke, you look fantastic, like nothing ever happened.

Misha Montana 8:10

And it's like, Oh, thank you. But up here, it's the invisible side effects that are the worst. Like, I almost would rather have my face be a little off than have horrible severe, like, anxiety and depression and then like, not be able to remember my day, or anything that I have to do. Like, my memory is terrible. And my neurologist at the time, said, you know, give it a six month baseline.

Misha Montana 8:44

And that's kind of where you're going to be at and every day, it's about six month mark. I was like, I'm just like, hoping I would remember more and not to knock the progress that I made because I think that that's triumphant in itself. But it definitely it's the unseen parts of it that are the most damaging for sure.

Misha Montana 9:11

And then I had a weird thing where my one year anniversary was just about almost two months ago. And right around that time like a month or two leading up to that I started having weird like blackout kind of things where or blackout and then be somewhere else. And like just weird memories.

Bill Gasiamis 9:38

Spaced out?

Misha Montana 9:39

Yeah, just random like and it's not one of those things where some people wake up in the morning, and especially I travel a lot so you wake up, you're like, oh, I have no idea where I am. But you get it right away. Were with me it actually takes like, minutes to try to like, come back to reality and I'd be like in the middle of the day just like standing there.

Misha Montana 10:02

And I'll just have a black out. And I won't know where I am, I'll be in a thought that I had or a memory that I had. It's a weird phenomenon. And it just kind of started around then. And then I started having the same kind of like, symptoms

come back. And I didn't think anything about it until I started talking to other survivors. And apparently, that's a fun common thing.

Bill Gasiamis 10:30

Normal, it's something that you create the psychosomatic response. And you bring it on because of the significance of the anniversary, because you're taking yourself back there. You're doing all the things that you know, you're remembering what it was like to go through that. And you've put this date as the date of doom and gloom in all this terrible thing.

Bill Gasiamis 10:56

And it doesn't really mean anything this next day, 12 months ago, doesn't actually mean anything. But we make it significant. And I'll ask stroke survivors all the time? Do they celebrate their anniversary? Or is it something that's not good? And a lot of people absolutely hate that anniversary? And how weird is it that you're good the day before the anniversary, you're good the day after the anniversary and the day of the anniversary, you're a mess.

Bill Gasiamis 11:26

And it's so bizarre that people do that to themselves. I remember being in a car lot at a shopping mall, where I've done all the shopping. And then I have to do the part where you go back to your car. And I've got no idea, I haven't forgotten. I've actually got zero idea where the car is. And I'm going from car park to car park and walking up and down all the levels and all the aisles trying to find the car.

Bill Gasiamis 11:59

And I bring my brother I think, or he calls me. And we're just chatting about other stuff. And he's going What are you doing? I said I'm walking around the car park, he goes why? I said I've got no idea where my car is. I haven't forgotten. I just zero. It's just not in there I cannot bring it back.

Misha Montana 12:21

It's literally just gone. And that's what people found. It's not like, it's different than other, like memory diseases or, you know, defects because it's literally just not there. There's nowhere to even recall it from it just doesn't exist anymore. Just black hole. I do it all the time too, I so I travel a lot, like I said, and then I've gone to the airport, two hours after my flight and left.

Oblivious About Stroke

Misha Montana 12:55

And it's like, you know, no reason other than your mind, it's just not connecting to things. And people their sympathy too for anything is very short-lived. It's you know, it's temporary. When you're in the hospital, and kind of like maybe a couple of weeks after you get out and in your you know, immediate recovery. People are sympathetic, but then, you know, six months later, a year later, they're like, Oh, are you still using the stroke as an excuse for things?

Bill Gasiamis 13:36

They're ignorant, and how can they get it when they've never had a stroke? Because just like we were ignorant before we've had a stroke, and we've got no idea.

Misha Montana 13:45

100% And I was just gonna say the same thing. I was like, I don't even blame them because it's like, I had no idea about what strokes were. I didn't even I mean, it's so ignorant to say now, but it's like, I thought strokes were mostly older people have strokes. You know, same thing with heart attacks, like not saying that it doesn't happen.

Misha Montana 14:06

But it was rare for anyone under the age of 65 to have a stroke or a heart attack in my mind. And the more that I've been, I talked to her a lot, a lot of survivors reach out to me daily weekly, which is a wonderful, wonderful thing for me. It's difficult for sure to hear a lot of these people's stories because most of them are so much more severe either for themselves or for people that they know.

Misha Montana 14:40

Most of the people that reach out to me their loved ones have passed away from strokes, various ages, different circumstances. It's really a fascinating spectrum of people like and it's amazing how common it really is.

Stroke Statistics

Misha Montana 14:57

And I never knew that before and I mean, I'm sure you didn't either why would

we, you know, but to learn more about strokes themselves, and then the people that their different experiences and recovery, it's really a fascinating topic. I wish it wasn't so prevalent. But it's amazing how many people are affected by it. Whether it's themselves or people that they know.

Bill Gasiamis 15:26

One in four Misha. Yeah, that's what the world stroke organization states, one in four people will have a stroke in their lifetime. Yeah, it's mental.

Misha Montana 15:38

That's a huge amount of people. And I think again, most people hear statistics like that. And they think that, you know, oh, it's probably reserved for like, a later part in life. Which is not the case at all. There is even Hailey Bieber, Justin Bieber's wife is 25. And she just had a stroke. Also. It's interesting, like, and it's so shocking when you hear like younger people having them. Obviously, in our like, case, like we're not 65. So it's really a tragic situation.

Bill Gasiamis 16:23

Tell me a little bit about, like the kind of person you were before stroke, because now you're telling me that you're suffering a little bit from depression, and you've got some others to tell me about your personality and what kind of a person you were and how the stroke's impacted that and changed you a little.

Misha Montana 16:41

I'm super like, I would consider myself to be a perfectionist. I'm an extremely professional person. So I'm very like business-oriented. For me, the worst part about it was, it affects every element of my life. As far as like making appointments, doing things where you have to be on time, and I wear like, never in my life, have I ever missed an appointment, or missed a phone call, I almost missed this because I have to put constant reminders.

Misha Montana 17:20

And I'm just like, oh my god, that's today, I have no concept of the day. So for me in the position that I'm in to, I run production. And I'm responsible for making other people's schedules let alone my own. And so it dramatically affected my work. I've been lucky in the sense where I've been on top of it so much, but it requires that much more effort and energy to just be normal, or my previous normal baseline, I have to do this much more to make it equal to what I was

before I'm faking it.

Misha Montana 17:58

Like I don't know if it's well, but I'm trying to fake it to make it be like how I was before so that no one would notice. And I've always been because I'm so like high strung with my work. And my stress load has always been really high. I overload myself, but I've never been depressed the way that I was, and have been on and off like I still am like I have bouts of it here and there too.

Misha Montana 18:31

So I have that feeling of being like trapped inside your own body and brain. And not being able to have any kind of connection with someone in your life that understands you, or understands that situation. It makes it that much more difficult too. So I've never really been isolated to that level. And I had to pretend like everything was fine, and it wasn't fine.

Bill Gasiamis 19:07

So you're around people all the time every day. And yet, you still feel isolated?

Misha Montana 19:13

I do and I still kind of feel that way. There's just something that's never been able to be like shaken from that time that I just feel like I'm in a dark little cave by myself. And I have to like pull myself out of it daily, just to accomplish the day-to-day tasks. And that's why I went back to work right away. I didn't take a break from work, because I thought that that was going to be something that was distracting myself from the darkness that was in my own mind too.

Misha Montana 19:55

And that was healing in a way in itself because it gave me a focus other than, not like self-loathing, but just like being obsessive about it. Or, you know, being paranoid that I was gonna have another stroke, all these different feelings and emotions that you naturally go through, I kind of ignored them. I shouldn't have because it cost me in the end, because I waited, you know, almost to the year mark, just kind of like pushing it off, not really ever acknowledging or even honestly, fully giving myself enough time to heal and recover.

Asking For Help

Bill Gasiamis 20:41

So, you know, in your business, did you start that off on your own? And did you ever reach out to anybody for any assistance, guidance, you know, information tips, did you have to do any of that?

Misha Montana 20:54

I didn't actually, I didn't do it right away at all. But that's because that's my personality type is don't ask for help.

Bill Gasiamis 21:09

I set that up on purpose, I wanted to catch you out and say to you, now, that's it, now's the time to reach out and get help for your how you're feeling emotionally, psychologically, physically, because this is completely unknown. And, it's not like starting a business, or working on your business, or employing people or anything like that. It's about self-support, self-promotion, self-healing, self-recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 21:42

And we are the worst people to help ourselves. A lot of the times, we need other people to guide us, and give us the ability to overcome what we just experienced, because it's traumatic. Misha, I mean, you've gone through a life-altering situation, it may have killed you. And maybe you haven't thought about your mortality yet. But I get a sense that part of the challenges that you're going through the fact that you're 31, you've had a stroke, and you realizing now that your mortal, and you never knew that before 31, you know, so does that relate?

Misha Montana 22:23

Oh, 100%. And I think that's probably what a lot of the anxiety and the depression comes from that realization. Not feeling like, you know, people immediately around you, again, you know, I've tried to explain it to people in my professional and personal life, and they just don't understand, which I don't expect them to at some point too.

Misha Montana 22:53

That's why we, you know, later on about it see, like, I think six months, and I started seeking out other survivors, and doing different podcasts. And honestly, the two that I had done with Joe, there have they've been wonderful resources,

and just somebody that can share your experience. Like, every time I get to talk to somebody who's had a stroke, there's just that unsaid bond that we all have with each other where it's like, I understand you, I get you, and it's comforting too it's like, you know, it gives you a feeling of that you're not alone.

Bill Gasiamis 23:46

Just to give you an insight into me and my challenge with this whole thing, right? I was 37. That was 10 years ago. And I need to speak with people constantly about this. So much so that I started a podcast, and I've done nearly 200 episodes, and I've not done enough, and I'm still not done connecting with people and, talking about it and sharing stories.

Bill Gasiamis 24:16

So like, it is a huge thing for me, if I hadn't had these 200 episodes, I honestly don't know who I would be today. Like how bad in a psychological space I would be. And I'm someone that goes to counseling. I go to coaching. I've coached people and I support people. And I still need all of this level of support because my wife has got no idea. I don't want her to ever have an idea what it's like.

Bill Gasiamis 24:47

So I can't continuously lay down all the stuff that stroke is about to her every single day because she can't cope with it and she doesn't even know how to help other than being an amazing wife. Right? And the rest of my family are also oblivious to it. And I look "normal" but I live with it every single day.

Bill Gasiamis 25:12

And I feel the feelings that it left me with every single day. And it's made me think about things really, really deeply one of those things is my own mortality and my own potential death at some point in time. And I'm coming to terms with it, and I'm getting better about it, and I'm feeling better about it. But it didn't take, it didn't happen. In the first 12 months, I was just as terrible.

Bill Gasiamis 25:39

I was just as upset, unwell, mentally, socially, emotionally and physically. It's taken 10 years of constantly working on myself and doing personal development stuff, and all the things that I had avoided for 37 years because like you, I knew how to do it all on my own, I didn't ask anyone for how to start my business. I learned things the hard way, I was stubborn, I didn't want to prove that I didn't

know.

Bill Gasiamis 26:07

And then here I am, 10 years later. And I can see how far I've come. And I've overcome most of those things. But they all do turn up every once in a while the anxiety, you know, not the depression, I wouldn't call it depression, but I would call it for me, it's kind of like, low days where I'm doing doom and gloom kind of stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 26:30

And then the thing that helps me the most is what you're saying is connecting with other stroke survivors that understand me constantly making a point of sharing the information I learned and then sharing the information that you're learning to the people that are listening. So I think what I want to do is I want to give you a sense of it's going to be better down the track, and you're very early on in your stroke, recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 27:05

It's not like a broken bone. But it gets better, it gets better and better and better. But it does need you to do a little bit of work as well, like you need to do some work in supporting yourself to get better. And that's why you need to pick up some local amazing counselors will coaches or somebody who's going to guide you further.

It's Okay Not To Be Okay - Misha Montana



Misha Montana 27:31

I agree. 100% actually, one of my majors in college was psychology. So I'm kind of like that person that knows exactly what to do, but then refuses to do it for themselves. But no, I agree. I think it's critically important, especially, you know, you can ignore things, or pretend like everything's fine for so long, until it starts like rearing its ugly head.

Misha Montana 28:00

And then what do you do, then it's a total disaster. Which has happened, I've had just bizarre outbursts and breakdowns that I never would have had before. And I almost pushed it off so much that I didn't even recognize that that's where it was from. I didn't know where it was from, but then it was like, Oh, it can't be from the stroke, you know, I've started conditioning my own mind to be like, That happened a year ago. There's no way that it's from that, which is not accurate at all.

Misha Montana 28:36

And I know that I mean, I've come to the point where I realized, like what's happening, and that I do have to put in the effort and the work and I think we're so critical of ourselves and to not feel, "normal" or like your old self. And you judging yourself at where you were before. And it's like that constant comparison of like, well, I could have done this a year and a half ago, what can I do with it now?

Misha Montana 29:14

And just giving yourself the break, or even just the slack to be like, You know what, it's okay, that I'm not okay right now. And that's what I've been saying the past couple months, like, it's okay for me to admit that I need a minute. I need some time. I need some time alone, I needed this. I'm recognizing what I need and establishing those boundaries.

Misha Montana 29:41

So that I can get just for my own mental and mostly mental health but emotional and physical health as well. You know, you need to take care of those things. And it's like you said it's not a broken bone kind of event. It's not like you broke your ankle and heels and then you could probably go back to 99% you know, normal activity resume normal activity.

Misha Montana 30:05

With us. It's I mean, this is our brain that's damaged. So there's a lot more to it. And it affects like, it has changed my personality and mood and routine and sleep patterns and everything else, which I'm sure it has with you as well. It's one of those things that you wake up one day, and you have to accept that you're never going to be the same person again. And that's something that I think a lot of people have a difficult time accepting because it brings up fear.

Bill Gasiamis 30:42

Yeah, it brings up fear because of change and identity is impacted.

Intro 30:47

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

Intro 31:11

If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation, stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you. It's called seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke. These seven questions are the ones Bill wished he'd asked when he was recovering from a stroke, they'll not only help you better understand your condition, they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery, head to the website. Now, recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide, it's free.

Bill Gasiamis 31:49

There's a time to heal the rest to recuperate and give yourself space. Now's the time like give yourself the opportunity, the permission to do that. Now I know that it still gets in the way of your work, your time, your deadline, the kind of person that you were all those things change. But you've got to change your identity with this stroke thing that's happened to you.

Bill Gasiamis 32:10

And if people have a very small description of themselves, when you meet

somebody at a party, and say, what do you do? And they say, I'm an accountant, and you don't get anything else from them. All they say is I'm an accountant. And then say they have a stroke and they can't do numbers. And they don't identify as anybody other than the accountant, then their identity is gone immediately.

Bill Gasiamis 32:34

If they're not, I'm an accountant. And I'm somebody who enjoys walks, bike rides, I'm a father I'm this I'm that I'm whatever, if they are just an accountant. They're going to struggle with who they are, they're going to have those questions of like, I can't do numbers now. So what am I what use am I how am I going to operate in this world, and then they have to reinvent themselves and find themselves. \

Bill Gasiamis 33:01

But they have to do that while they're recovering from a brain injury. That's hard. And adding reinventing yourself into brain injury recovery. And all the other stuff that goes with it, like it's a big task, and it takes a while and the effort is huge. And the fatigue kicks in and the interruptions kick in because of the appointments and the scans and all the stuff that we've got to do to make sure that we're okay and that everything has been sorted. And it's like, far out. This could take awhile.

Misha Montana 33:32

That's interesting that you say that too. Because, you know, whenever you meet someone, and usually the first thing people bring up is well, what do you do? You know, I do this as if like, that's the most prominent, like definitive aspect of someone is their career. And you're right, like when you have like a sense of identity crisis, when you tie yourself so heavily to your career or like your wealth, different kind of superficial factors that most humans attach to.

Misha Montana 34:12

So when you lose the ability to do those things, for example, with me, the first thing that which is crazy people think that I'm crazy for this line of thought that first and foremost I have a five-year-old son who has cerebral palsy. And excuse me, that was the biggest concern that I had in my mind is my ability to take care of him.

Misha Montana 34:37

And that's a real concern. The second thing was, I was so terrified to lose my career. And it was not it was like this is my sense of identity. There was actually

an article posted about me and Daily Star The one other quotes that I gave someone was, I was joking that I would have to do certain activities are right handed. Because I couldn't use my right hand, I couldn't use my mouth in my line of work, that's a huge deal.

Misha Montana 35:16

But to lose that I was so afraid to do it. And that's why I went back to work two and a half weeks out of the hospital, when I should not have, but I did it because I was so fearful of not being able to do it. I did it so that I could show myself that I can still do it. Or I was curious to see if I could. And I can, but still, in my mind, I'm not the same person when I show up to do things. It's like, numb and in a sense.

What's Happening Underneath - Misha Montana Stroke



Misha Montana 35:55

And I have to it's like, you know, when you're pumping the train full of coal, and it's just running 100 miles an hour, no one sees that part. They just think it's running smoothly. When you know, it's about to fall off the tracks. Like, nobody sees what's happening underneath the hood of everything. So that's kind of where I was out. It was like, I'm trying to maintain this facade of, you know, some semblance of normalcy, and it just wasn't, it's not working at some point.

Misha Montana 36:32

Because you can't, you can only hold up that illusion for so long. And then, when

it does, the curtain finally falls, it's messy. And then people think, you know, what is wrong with this girl or is she have a full blown mental breakdown, it's like, because of what had happened nine months prior. But nobody links those two things together at that point, because it was so far in the past.

Bill Gasiamis 37:02

Yeah. They don't join the dots. But also, you're not forthright in coming to them with information about how your last nine months have been, you know, you're withholding as much information as you can, so that you can appear normal, so you can go back to work. And they're trying to connect the dots. And they're going, she was back to work a couple of weeks later. And now nine months later, she's saying that this is going, how could that possibly be? She wouldn't have been back to work by then.

Bill Gasiamis 37:37

And then it's like, they're all confused. They don't know about stroke. And they don't know about all of the psychological challenges that you're going through to convince people you're okay. And that you can still perform and that you can still be professional, and you can still do all these things. You're playing this, you're putting on this facade. And then people get caught out nine months later going, Wow, she never made it appear as though there was any issues. And I'm not intelligent enough or I don't know enough about stroke to be able to pick up that it was a facade, they've got no idea.

Misha Montana 38:18

Yeah, I really don't think that people. I mean, most people don't have the ability to look that far into it with other people too where they take things at surface value. Like if I tell you that I'm okay. Most people are gonna be like, okay, cool.

Bill Gasiamis 38:36

Especially when you first see them in the morning. How are you? Good. And that's it, we move on.

Misha Montana 38:43

Yeah, everything's great. But it's not like everything's perfect all the time. Right?

Bill Gasiamis 38:49

And nobody ever says, I'm having a really shit day or the stroke is really messing with me today. You know, and I'm stuffed because the other person on the other

end of the conversation, when they ask you, how are you they actually just want to hear good so they can move on.

Misha Montana 39:04

They don't wanna hear anything other than that. You know what, actually, let me tell you, how my day is. They'd be appalled. Because yeah, it's like that. It's just kind of disingenuous, like I have to ask you how you're doing.

Bill Gasiamis 39:25

And they will never ask anyone ever again. If somebody says to him, you know, my stroke did this and I've had that and this. They'll never ask anybody ever again.

Misha Montana 39:35

No. Never, never, never again.

Bill Gasiamis 39:41

So what happened with your son when you were in hospital and how long did you spend in hospital?

Misha Montana Parenting And Having A Stroke

Misha Montana 39:45

I was in the hospital for five days. I'm a single mom. I take care of my son exclusively. When I travel, thank God, my parents watch him. So when I was traveling and this particular incident, he was not with me. But that was like the hardest part about it, too, was being away from him for a week, and he has no idea what is going on.

Misha Montana 39:45

And I didn't want him to come to the hospital as much as that thought crosses your mind, where it's like, should I have him come to the hospital? Like, what if I die? But then, I answered that question, in my own mind with, I wouldn't want him to see me in the hospital. As far as he was concerned, I went to work, which I typically do travel.

Misha Montana 40:51

And then I just might not have come back. So and it was COVID, like, the restrictions at that point, were really, really severe. So I can only have one person come in a day anyway. But I just didn't that environment is like, especially for

children. I remember having to go to my parents are making me go to the hospitals see my grandmother in the hospital, and it's just traumatic, and awful.

Misha Montana 41:18

It's not even like I mean one, it's seeing them in that situation. And you know, the gown and like, it's really just like, not the best way to remember someone. So I decided not need to have him come. But thankfully, you know, my parents took care of him. But that was the biggest thing on my mind the whole time was, I mean, if I have a serious brain injury, and at that point, like, my whole face was completely gone.

Misha Montana 41:44

They put me on a swallowing restriction. Because of the neurological damage. They didn't know if I could swallow solid food. So how am I supposed to take care of a special needs child when his father doesn't support him or myself? In any way? I've never asked for child support. I've never, you know, nothing custody-handled stuff.

Misha Montana 42:12

So I have 100% custody of him. There's no one else that can care for him. But me. So that's again, where mortality comes into play. Because it makes me like it turns the microscope on to your situation. And be like, well, if I hit my best tomorrow, that's the same thing. Like what would happen then? So you start looking at it more intensely than I think like you would if you didn't have such an event happened.

Bill Gasiamis 42:43

You didn't before right? You didn't before that you didn't consider it before the stroke. So your son, to what extent is he is he challenged by the cerebral palsy? What are his challenges?

Misha Montana 43:00

Thankfully, it's not severe. He had he actually had a stroke in utero. When he was just about to be born, that wasn't caught until about three months old, which is actually relatively early of which I'm thankful for. We caught it really early. So he's been in physical occupational speech therapy since he was three months old. And a lot of people same kind of thing. And they say, Oh, he looks normal. I can't even tell. Which, yeah, they're trying to be polite. But they're trying.

Bill Gasiamis 43:45

Trying to make you feel better, because they don't know how to be around persons who are unwell or struggling with a condition. Does your stroke make it easier for you to understand your son?

Misha Montana 44:03

You know, I actually think having him go through that diagnosis. And with all the challenges that I was facing daily before the stroke that actually gave me I think more of like a cushion on like different tools that I wouldn't have had to be more sympathetic with myself and with others. I think he has given me a lot more comfort and insight into my own situation, if that makes sense. Yeah. It's kind of an interesting, it's ironic, I guess, to like, you know, he had a stroke.

Misha Montana 44:50

Totally unrelated. You know, it's not a genetic thing. It's just, you know, bizarre coincidence, but no, going through cerebral palsy with him, he's now he's almost six. Going through this for the last, you know, almost six years with him, that event actually changed me into a person that almost made me more capable of being able to withstand the stroke.

Misha Montana 45:21

And having that kind of a mindset that was receptive and open to having a disability before were eight years ago, I don't know what my state of mind would be like, dealing with it. So I think having him actually really has helped me a lot. It doesn't change the internal workings that I have. But I really think that it's helped a lot, a lot, a lot, a lot.

Misha Montana 45:56

But it also enhanced my anxiety and paranoia and the fear of, you know, that realization, like you said, mortality, so I could have died from this and what would have happened to him? So then I'm constantly now fixated on that subject. Like what if something happens to me? And it's not a healthy pattern at all.

Bill Gasiamis 46:21

No. It sounds like you need to put in a few steps in place to protect him in the event that something else happens that we can't control. Right. And I think that's going to put your mind at ease. If you put some steps in place, for I don't know, some kind of funding or something, anything that is going to make it possible for

you to sleep better at night, knowing that he is looked after to an extent. You know, that might make it better for you.

Misha Montana 46:51

I did that, too like, just not my recently, I've always had some things set up for him. But I mean, I really went into trying to figure out what I could establish so that he would be taken care of. And it does give you some relief. It's kind of interesting to hear, because my father is a probate attorney, which is ironic.

Misha Montana 47:26

And I never had a will, which we were like, that makes no sense. But I didn't because one of the things like he deals with clients is that people are hesitant to make a will, because they think that they're setting themselves up to die.

Misha Montana 47:47

So I don't know if it was like that superstition, but I avoided for a long time myself. I don't think it was superstition. I think it was just like, I thought I was young and had no need to be concerned with such things, which is such an ignorant way of thinking about the world.

The Three Bleeds

Bill Gasiamis 48:06

I did my will after the three bleeds and brain surgery is when I did my will I finally got it done. Yeah.

Misha Montana 48:16

You had? Do you mind? I haven't heard your story.

Bill Gasiamis 48:23

I had to bleed in the brain because of an AVM an arteriovenous malformation is something that you're born with that's there that is benign. Most of the time. It does nothing for a lot of people, but sometimes they pop and they bleed. And it bled once in February 2012 and it bled a second time in March of 2012.

Bill Gasiamis 48:46

And then it bled a third time in November 2014. And then I had to have brain surgery, my surgeon just said to me, look, this thing is not going to stop bleeding. And the next one could be the one that ends everything. So you need to get it out

of your head. So I had surgery and removed it. And then I had to learn how to walk again and use my left side again.

Bill Gasiamis 49:09

And one of the things that it's left me with is numbness on my left side, my whole left side is numb every day and my balance is a bit off, especially when I get tired. And I get some stiffness and spasticity on my left side when I get tired. But again, no one can see it, any of it. It's just all under my skin and it's not visible.

Bill Gasiamis 49:40

So yeah, in those nearly three years between the first bleed and then brain surgery. I had all of the problems that a lot of stroke survivors talk about but most of them went away. I had a little bit of aphasia, I had a problem with memory, I couldn't begin and end sentences sometimes, I couldn't type, I couldn't read, I couldn't drive, I couldn't work.

Bill Gasiamis 50:12

I was angry, angry, angry, I was crazy angry. So, and then, at some point, I also experienced not being able to walk, and in a wheelchair and not being able to push myself with both arms. So I've had this really broad range of experiences and symptoms because of these bleeds. And it's been a lot to bloody handle and a lot to bear and a lot to overcome.

Bill Gasiamis 50:45

And this year, this is my 10th year since it all started, and I kind of felt like, I needed to celebrate it, but then I didn't. And then one of the reasons is because I talk about it so much, I talk about my stroke and other people's stroke so much that I feel like anniversaries don't mean anything to me, it's like it's just another day, it doesn't matter, I am grateful that I'm here.

Bill Gasiamis 51:19

And I've done, I've changed a lot of things, my personality, the way that I apologize to people, the amount of times I say I love you, to my kids, and to my wife and to my parents and to everybody. And it's been a blessing and a curse, like the biggest blessing because I've had the most growth personally, from 37 onwards, and then I've had the most shit to bear in the last 10 years more than most people cop in a lifetime. And then I meet people like you. And last night I was at a fundraising event, called A Night For Aphasia.

Bill Gasiamis 52:10

Where in Melbourne, Australia. There's an amazing lady who I interviewed for the podcast a few episodes ago, quite a few now is raising awareness for aphasia. And we went there and we met stroke survivors, and we listen to them speak and struggle through speech to deliver their speech and to be interviewed and all that kind of stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 52:33

And, you know, I never hung out with people like us before that I never, ever, ever hung out with people like us, I never met people from the other side of the planet. I never hung out with people from different cultural backgrounds and different ideas and different experiences it was this really, you know, I have a small narrow view of the world. And because of the stroke, my view has expanded, and it's made it amazing, you know, I've interviewed people that were just regular people like me.

Bill Gasiamis 53:17

And then I've interviewed people that we're a little bit more kind of full-on in their lives already. And I've met people that are really quiet, they became full-on and people that were full-on that became quiet. And it's just so broad. So it's been an amazing learning experience. I wouldn't change it. But I wish it happened without the stroke.

Misha Montana 53:42

I agree. But I think that, I mean, it does in a way I am which I think that you touched on this too. In a weird way, you're thankful for that, because it gives us like, as much as I wouldn't want it if I had the choice. But it gives you a unique perspective, on life, on relationships on love on the world. That honestly, a lot of people will never have in their life.

Misha Montana 54:29

And I don't know if that's something that is a blessing because sometimes it's like ignorance is blissful I think I envy the ignorance because at least like if you were ignorant, then you'd have some sense of peace once in a while. I think you know, being awake to, everything has its ups and downs, it's a double edged sword.

Misha Montana 54:56

But I really do think that it's a gift in a sense, because it's how you choose to look

at it. And that's why when I started feeling, you know, negative thoughts, it's, if I open up my email when I meet somebody, you know, or talk with people, and just talking to me, which I think is crazy still to this day, but people reach out to me, and it changes their whole day hearing about my story, or the fact that because I'm, you know, a public figure, in a sense, like, people reach out to me, or they look to me, and it does actually impact people.

Bill Gasiamis 55:37

They look to you as a guide. Now, you're an adult entertainer, you make adult movies, right. And I've seen your Instagram, and your Instagram promotes the work that you do, right? And then there's a post from you talking to the camera, about your stroke, and all the stuff that you've been going through, and all the challenges that you're facing.

Bill Gasiamis 56:02

And it's like, out of place. But it's like, it's that thing that makes you then a real person, because the other person, the other version of you is an adult entertainer an actor, playing a role. And then your fans, or the people who've seen your work, will look at it, and they'll go, they'll have an opinion and an idea of that person that you portray on film.

Bill Gasiamis 56:38

And then they'll get blown away when they see you just, you know, to your phone, talking about your challenges and what you're trying to overcome. And then that will just make them an even greater fan to you. Like, they'll see another level of you that's more authentic, and they'll go, oh, my gosh, this person's a real person. She has feelings, she's been through a really tough time.

Bill Gasiamis 57:05

And they'll relate to you in another way that they've never related before. So I get that it's weird for you that people reach out to you for this type of connection and this type of information, because they do it to me, and I'm like, I'm gonna say, weird as well. Right? I have fans, this is weird, that I even say this, and people get kind of Starstruck when I invite them onto the podcast with me, I'm like do you know who I am? Like, you've got no idea. I'm just a weirdo in my garage in Melbourne, Australia, that's put some stuff on a wall. And in front of me, there's just two monitors, and a ring light. And that's it.

A Documentary About Misha Montana

Misha Montana 57:51

But you are, that's the thing. And I'm the same way I'm like, even to this day, I've always like overwhelmed about now people view me in the way that they do. And I don't know if that's something that I'll ever get over. But it's like, it's just kind of interesting, because when they reach out and they're like, you know, so what I did with my stroke, is I created an adult showcase DVD.

Misha Montana 58:31

And it's never been done in the history of adult film, which believe it or not, because everything has been done, right? We did a documentary-style showcase that actually has the stroke in it. And my whole life in it.

Misha Montana 58:50

My son is not inhibit mentioned, you know, things like that. And that movie changed the industry this year in a way that I never thought it would. My whole point was doing it as I never I was very private before. No one knew I had a son. I kept that part of my life. Like, I felt like, I put myself out into the public eye so I can be destroyed.

Bill Gasiamis 59:21

People can go after you.

Misha Montana 59:23

Yeah, they go after me. It's one thing like, Yeah, but you know, I was always afraid of the people in my life that I wanted to protect from this because I chose this. They didn't, you know. And when that happened, and we started I had a documentary crew with me for the adult film because we were showcasing I have unique tattoos.

Misha Montana 59:49

And that was kind of the preface of that whole thing and it switched directions when I had a stroke. And the direction they went was, you know, this is a human piece and I am you know I'm an EP on that project. And obviously I have a huge role in it because it's about me. But I remember Ivan, who was directing it called me.

Misha Montana 1:00:10

And it was the day before it went to cut, because he has all this footage of my son and my dad had a heart attack and all this different stuff that was very, very personal stuff. And he asked me if I wanted to use it, and I was so adamantly like, no, no, no. And then I said, you know why? Yeah, actually, I was like, because if I'm going to stand up here, and share my experiences, and try to advocate for, you know, authenticity, and trying to humanize an industry that's so scrutinized and like, demonized, you know, all the time.

Misha Montana 1:00:49

That I have to be a full martyr for their cause, and I'm going to do it, and it's uncomfortable for me. But the stroke gave me an opportunity for a second chance. And it gave me the opportunity to use the platform that I have to advocate, and to reach people that might not ever have anyone to look to.

Misha Montana 1:01:12

As weird as it is that I'm in the industry that I'm in, I still have connections with people on levels that you wouldn't even believe because of that movie. And they're reworking it now into a mainstream documentary. So fingers crossed, it'll actually go somewhere, but it's been nominated. This is the sixth award show, it was nominated for best movie of the year.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:39

Sensational.

Misha Montana 1:01:41

It's crazy.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:42

And it's what you said, like we touched on earlier, it's like, you and I, we come from completely different backgrounds, we're from the other side of the planet, we've only met once today is the first time we met other than that a couple of emails were sent to each other. And yet, we had that connection. Because we completely, totally understand this part about each other, we totally understand what each other is going through.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:10

And we don't need to know about the rest of our lives. Because this part of our life is so significant that, when somebody gets us, it means a lot. Like it really means a lot. And that's why people reach out to you. Even though you're from an

industry that they are not familiar with, and they go oh my God I get this person, she gets me and I get her. And then they do that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:39

They bridge gaps, that are vast and wide, you know, from all these other reasons that everything just gets breached. And then the view narrows, and then it's just like these two things, stroke, we had a stroke, I had a stroke, we had trauma. She had trauma, I had trauma. And it's like, everything just comes together. And that's why I love that thing that you're doing. And I don't know about the adult industry.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:11

I've certainly never seen any adult films that show people that are unwell, or people that have had disability, or people that are amputees or any of that stuff. So I've never seen anything like that. I've never searched for it, but I've never seen it. And I'm wondering, maybe, you know, we're hearing about diversity and about inclusivity and all that kind of stuff yet.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:38

There's still so much more to represent about humans other than what happens, you know, on these kind of normal sort of every day, the same over and over kind of formula for an adult movie or even a Hollywood blockbuster or whatever. I think there's much more room for people that are different to be included in these spaces, you know.

Misha Montana 1:04:09

I agree. I totally agree. I think that's why it was kind of one of those things with like this industry where, you've probably seen it all, but it's always in this movie, I think appealed to because if you think about it, you know how many I mean, just last year alone, I would imagine there were 10,000 movies made potentially, in a year and for someone to recognize what I did.

Misha Montana 1:04:45

It's crazy to me to because it means it's literally a top five top 10 piece of you know, history potentially. For me, it already isn't solidified. I mean, these award shows it's like the Oscars. was nominated for the adult version of the Oscars. Yeah, so it's like. And I think that that's impactful, and a lot of ways because everything that you hear to about the adult industry is often negative. It's always

tragic, it's always dark.

Misha Montana 1:04:59

And when I got into the industry, which is again, why it's like, it's, it's almost like you follow a certain path for a purpose, right? I have always been on that mission to prove that. It's not like that. And the stroke, as unfortunate as it is, and, you know, suffering consequences from that daily, but it gave me a purpose.

Misha Montana 1:04:59

And it gave me the tools that I needed to accelerate and promote that ideology with people that I don't think I would have had without it, it makes me not that I'm not relatable, but it gives me something to relate to people on a level that they feel comfortable relating to me, I've always felt comfortable relating to other people.

Misha Montana 1:04:59

But now, I think it levels the playing fields, and opens it up so that people and people messaged me that, like, they would never have a conversation with me, if I didn't have that in common with them. Like you said, like, when you meet stroke survivors, I get so like, excited, in a sense, like not I mean, it's horrible.

Misha Montana 1:04:59

You know, but it's like, but I'm so excited, because I'm like, you actually know what it's like. And I said, that's why they reach out and I, I sit there and have full conversations with them every day. And it's beautiful. And that alone, like, that is the most important thing in my life other than my son, it is like making those connections.

Misha Montana 1:04:59

It's given me that that progress, and I am motivated by that. And it also reminds me of my own circumstances, too. So I need that, you know, constant reminder. But it's also a reminder that I can't one operate the way that I was before. There's no way to I need to take care of myself. And there's no way that I can help other people if I can't take care of myself in the first place. So that's kind of what it ultimately boils down to.

Misha Montana 1:04:59

But it's wonderful like, and I am so thankful for, for the story to be out there. And I hope that's what it does. I hope that's the only hope that I have with it is that it

can reach someone on a level that they need in their life. And to know that they're not alone. And it means so much to me to be that person. And it is like some people find it strange because of the position that I'm in that I am this candidate about my experiences and my wife, and it's so unweighted to my career. And a lot of people just kind of put their puppet out there.

Misha Montana 1:04:59

And they do it. And nobody knows about their life. But that's their brand. That's their business. And I was like that myself, I didn't want anyone to know anything about me. But now it gives me so much joy. And it actually does, like increase the value of the relationships that I have with fans.

Misha Montana 1:04:59

And with just people in general like they have never seen somebody be that relatable before. And it's off. I mean, I I never in my right like I no one's ever seen me cry until this last year. And now everybody just sees me cry all the time. They cry all the time.

Misha Montana 1:05:17

For me, it already is it's solidified. I mean, these award shows it's like the Oscars. It was nominated for the adult version of the Oscars. So it's like. And I think that that's impactful, in a lot of ways because everything that you hear too about the adult industry is often negative. It's always tragic, it's always dark. And when I got into the industry, which is again, why it's like, it's almost like you follow a certain path for a purpose, right?

Misha Montana 1:05:30

I have always been on that mission to prove that. It's not like that. And the stroke, as unfortunate as it is, and, you know, suffering consequences from that daily, but it gave me a purpose. And it gave me the tools that I needed to accelerate and promote that ideology with people that I don't think I would have had without it, it makes me not that I'm not relatable, but it gives me something to relate to people on a level that they feel comfortable relating to me, I've always felt comfortable relating to other people.

Misha Montana 1:06:18

But now, I think it levels the playing fields, and opens it up so that people and people messaged me that, like, they would never have a conversation with me, if I

didn't have that in common with them. Like you said, like, when you meet stroke survivors, I get so like, excited, in a sense, like not I mean, it's horrible. You know, but it's like, but I'm so excited, because I'm like, you actually know what it's like. And like you said, that's why they reach out and I sit there and have full conversations with them every day. And it's beautiful.

Misha Montana 1:06:58

And that alone, like, that is the most important thing in my life other than my son, it is like making those connections. It's given me that purpose, and I am motivated by that. And it also reminds me of my own circumstances too. So I need that, you know, constant reminder. But it's also a reminder that I can't one, operate the way that I was before there's no way two, I need to take care of myself. And there's no way that I can help other people if I can't take care of myself in the first place.

Misha Montana 1:07:43

So that's kind of what it ultimately boils down to. But it's wonderful like, and I am so thankful for the story to be out there. And I hope that's what it does. I hope that's the only hope that I have with it is that it can reach someone on a level that they need in their life. And to know that they're not alone. And it means so much to me to be that person.

Misha Montana 1:08:13

And it is like some people find it strange because of the position that I'm in that I am this candidate about my experiences and my wife, and it's so unweighted to my career. And a lot of people just kind of put their puppet out there. And they do it. And nobody knows about their life. But that's their brand. That's their business.

Misha Montana 1:08:35

And I was like that myself, I didn't want anyone to know anything about me. But now it gives me so much joy. And it actually does, like increase the value of the relationships that I have with fans. And with just people in general like they have never seen somebody be that relatable before. And I mean, I I never like no one's ever seen me cry until this last year. And now everybody just sees me cry all the time.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:12

And you know, what you've done is you've changed your identity from being the person on screen in adult movies to the person on screen in adult movies, that's a stroke survivor, that is also a mom of a child has cerebral palsy. So do you see how now you've kind of bridged the gap between being just this one version of yourself to this other multiple different versions of yourself that are all part of the one you right?

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:41

And now you've got 50k followers on Instagram, but imagine all the people that have watched your videos. If we say one in four of them, we know either has or will have a stroke in their lifetime. So there's so many of them already relate to you. And now, how many people know somebody that has cerebral palsy, or how many parents have seen your shows that have children with cerebral palsy, and they relate to you in another level.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:21

And that's what I was talking about earlier, when I'm talking about how the accountant is just the accountant. If he's just an accountant, and not an accountant that does this, this and that, then you're so limited, and then you struggle so much with your identity shifting after a stroke. And for me, I was just a guy who had a business and painted houses, you know, for a living.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:48

And I couldn't do that anymore. And then I had a lot of time at home to try and work out who I was going to become. And whether that was going to stay part of my life or not. And it did, it stayed part of my life. But when, somebody asks me, What do you do now? I've got a list that goes about for 10 minutes, by the time I actually get it all off my tongue and tell them again, they wish they never asked.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:13

So it's really cool, that you've been able to do that, I've seen sometimes, you know, Sharon Stone had a stroke many years ago. The actress Sharon Stone had a stroke many years ago. And I related to her in a different way, when I realized that she's had a stroke and spoken about it publicly a couple of times, because she was in the biggest Hollywood blockbusters. And then she went missing.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:38

And because I'm not obsessed, I didn't try and find out where she went missing

to. But then 10 years later, you find out, Oh, my gosh, she had a stroke. And it's like, wow, okay, that makes sense. And now I can relate to her struggles and her challenges. And I see her as somebody who is not so distant from me, like I can't reach out and relate to her because I'll never know what it's like to be a Hollywood star. So I can't relate to her. But now I can. And I wish I didn't, but I do now. And that makes her more of a person. Because now I'm seeing beyond the characters that she's played.

Identity Crisis - Misha Montana

Misha Montana 1:12:21

Right? Which is interesting when that happens too because, you know, in Hollywood, and like in my industry, I am a character I'm not myself, right? I mean, it's a part of you. And sometimes there's a blurred line between how much of the authentic you is in that role, versus the persona that you've created.

Misha Montana 1:12:49

And a lot of people have identity crisis because of that. But when you're in that role, people bizarrely, we like put you up onto a pedestal that where you're like unattainable, and you're just this figure like an idol. And it's like it dehumanizes you so much to where you know, you're not approachable, people just treat you in such a strange way, until you get brought down to a human level.

Misha Montana 1:13:26

And that's why I say it was a blessing for me too, because I don't know, honestly, like, no matter what I would have said, to try to relate to people on that level and to try to humanize an industry that, that people are so critical of. I don't know if I would have been able to, without having the stroke. Because it does bring me down to that level of like accessibility and just in people's minds, it's like, not saying that that's how I view my, like, the superhero effect.

Misha Montana 1:13:59

But for some people, it is like just some people I am like their Idaho self is hard to me. But to them, it's real, you know, and to be brought down to that level. It gives them, even more, hope and excitement to to how to know that they are Wow, that girl actually is going to talk to me and we're human. I can't believe that because she's this and this and as odd as it is to me and to other people and our you know, different professions that have that issue.

Misha Montana 1:14:36

It's like, I think I've been successful, or at least I hope that I am and will be and being able to bridge that gap. And to be honest and to share my experiences to try to better not only my industry, but just you know survivors in general For people, when you said that have CP for anyone that has any kind of, you know, a health issue or a mental health issue, those are so important to me.

Misha Montana 1:15:11

Like, if I can make a difference in one person's life, then that's my purpose in life. So like you said, it's redefining your purpose, and your identity into, you know, this new version of yourself. And it's uncomfortable at first. But I think what I'm really embracing it, the only issue that I have is that I have to acknowledge my own, you know, demons with my disease.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:48

The only issue you have with it is you have to actually acknowledge the demons for the first time in your life?

Misha Montana 1:15:53

I can do as I say, not as I do.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:57

Yeah. You have to practice what you preach.

Misha Montana 1:16:00

You look at yourself in the mirror and be like, if I'm sitting there advocating, for, you know, people to get help. And so like, be honest, and to be, you know, outspoken about things. It's like well then, you know, you have to do that yourself.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:18

You can't be inauthentic. That's part of the reason why I do this is because I talk to people once a week on a podcast that comes out once a week, and I give them advice and tips and all sorts of stuff. And I share my experience and all that stuff. And it's like, I cannot be anything less than the person that I am telling you that you need to become because it doesn't work otherwise, it's not authentic people can see right through you. And it's so fake. Yeah, yeah. So I know, I know that.

Misha Montana 1:16:55

That's why I tell people. I'm like I tell them, we've embraced this authenticity,

identity. Almost too far, I think at this point. I tell everybody everything. We're having a tough day today. But I know, I think it's good. Because again, I've gone through things other than the stroke that I'm just going to be honest about and open about and be like, there are a lot of things that are not pretty, in my recovery that I thought about not sharing. But I wouldn't mind.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:38

You know, what's interesting is stroke is just as taboo as adult film.

Misha Montana 1:17:43

It is, it is, well, as soon as people find out that you've had a stroke, too, then you're potentially eliminating, like your work. Especially I can't even imagine somebody goes in for a job interview. And they find out you have a stroke, do you think that you're employable? Like, I mean, honestly, for somebody to be like, oh well, it's just an excuse, they have mental problems, they've got physical problems, you know, they're gonna go to doctor's appointments, and they can't remember anything.

Misha Montana 1:18:15

Like, there's such a huge stigma around it too that I think, is horrible. And, again, it's just a lack of education, it's a lack of understanding that, you know, you and I were in that same situation, before we have a stroke. Most people don't know anything about it. And so I think that, you know, especially what you're doing, what I'm attempting to do, is, first and foremost, I could try to spread awareness and promote education.

Misha Montana 1:18:48

And, you know, for people that, you know, fortunately for them have not had a stroke, but may themselves or someone that they, no will potentially have one. And so, it's important to do these things and to advocate for it, and to talk to other people and to build the community that we have. I think it's just a wonderful community that we're in.

Misha Montana 1:19:16

I've met so many wonderful people, as I know that you have to so those pawns just mean more than anything, so but I think it's good. You know, what you're doing is great. What I'm trying to do is wonderful, and if we can provide awareness and even just somebody to listen, just to be there.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:34

So now, it's been a year. What did it leave you with early on? You know, he said, you went back to work so quickly. What were the things that you had to overcome when you went back to work? What deficits were you working with that people didn't know?

Misha Montana 1:19:55

You know, I honestly feel like the deficits that I NOTICE are more prominent now than they were a year ago. In my own mind. I think that physically, they were more noticeable, because I've watched, you know, luckily for me, I have a constant well-documented life over the last year. So I have actually been able to, like see a lot of, you know, different events where I was kind of curious to watch myself to be like, well, I know, I remember how well sometimes, I remember how I felt in that moment.

Misha Montana Had An Alcohol Problem



Misha Montana 1:20:37

So I wanted to see what it looked like, you know, on film, or to somebody that may not know me, and I pulled it off really well, for a while. My speech was limited more, and my face definitely took a little bit longer to come back to where it's at right now. But I really did play it off well, but I started drinking really heavily.

Misha Montana 1:21:06

And no one knew that. For the scenes I was doing every single scene that I did before the stroke, I was completely sober. I never needed to drink. And I was embarrassed about admitting that because I thought that it would provide, like

just another negative stigma of the industry where it's like, well, of course, you did, because they all do that, you know, they're all drunks and drug addicts.

Misha Montana 1:21:34

And it just contributed to that idea that people that preconceived notion that people have about people in my industry, so I didn't ever want to admit that. And that was a form of coping that kind of started just on set, and then it blew up into an every week thing, and then turn into an every other day thing, and then turn into an everyday thing.

Misha Montana 1:22:07

And it just blew up out of control. So and not to the point where, and I say that, you know, where I never like woke up in the morning and drink all day and didn't take care of my son. But I would drink two bottles of wine at night when he's asleep every night. So that's a problem.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:29

And that's not helping you recover your brain.

Misha Montana 1:22:33

No, and that was the biggest thing too. It's like, I have a brain injury. And here I am, like, heavily drinking, that's not helping my recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:47

What was behind the need to all of a sudden start drinking?

Misha Montana 1:22:52

I think it was just feeling the the isolation, and that I put myself into that situation. Like it wasn't there was nothing else that contributed to that except my own, like selfish need to, like prove a point to everybody that I could go back to work, and not take time off and not get home, and just take on the world like I was used to doing all the time. And so it was kind of like that secret escape that I needed. But I wasn't doing it in a healthy way. It was that I needed to I acknowledged that I was suffering. And so I turned to liquor to solve that problem.

Bill Gasiamis 1:23:48

Suffering in your head? Yeah.

Misha Montana 1:23:53

So it was like I could fake it throughout the day, and do everything the right way. And, you know, take care of my son and run my career and the 12 other careers that I have going and paint this really pretty picture for everyone.

Misha Montana 1:24:12

And you know, even you know, be an advocate and do all these things. And then at the end of the day, I was so miserable and drained and angry and just totally depressed. That it was the only thing that would give me a sense of relief. And even though it's like fleeting it's temporary and then you wake up and you feel like shit.

Bill Gasiamis 1:24:40

A lot of people will take it.

Misha Montana 1:24:43

But it was one of those things like and it was so surprising to people too I think, I admitted that recently that I was having that issue. Reluctantly that was honestly like more reluctant for me than talking about my son because because of the negative image and impact that it had, but it's like, the end of the day, like, I'm a human being, that's how some people cope. I've never cooked that way in my life.

Misha Montana 1:25:13

So I was like, I felt that kind of like weird stigmatic shame, where it's like, wow, okay. You know, I have a problem with alcohol. And to admit that, I felt shameful, for whatever reason, which is obviously, like, socially constructed. But I thought it was detracting from the message, which struggle, you know, if you're going to do something, you have to be honest about it, and start use it as an opportunity to be honest about that, and to relate to other people that may have the same issue that might be afraid to say something.

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:52

Many people have had a stroke and went to alcohol. When they're not meant to. But it's common, it makes sense. And it's, again, it's not something that you should judge that person about, but it happens.

Bill Gasiamis 1:26:07

And, you know, what we're trying to do is bring awareness to the situation so that we don't have to judge everybody all the bloody time and we can always just go

okay, well, that was a bad solution to a problem. Okay, what's a better solution to that problem? And, it sounds like you're you were became aware of that at one point, and then you started to look for a better solution. Where are you at with it now?

Misha Montana 1:26:37

I've actually been pretty good with it in the last month. I went through February, March, April, are really bad, heavy drinking. months for me, I guess you could say. And there were like other contributing factors to that right time period. But mostly, it was just heavy, heavy drinking. So I've been working on limiting my alcohol intake to the point where it was over six weeks, without alcohol.

Misha Montana 1:27:20

I've been smoking weed a little bit here and there, which is a weird thing for me. I've never been like a big weed person. And just something to try to, like redirect the, the need to the need to drink. I worked out like crazy. I'm a huge work er, maniac bodybuilding, cycling, all of that. So I turned back into that as a positive out book, you know? What's the word? No, I just missed it.

Misha Montana 1:27:55

Alright, there we go. There's the stroke, brain kicking in, outlet, outlet, positive outlets. So you know, working out doing those things, trying to just mentally align them with physical, good choices. But it's difficult because when you get into that pattern to it's, it's destructive, but it's also like comforting. So when you uproot it, you have all kinds of new anxieties and sweep issues that you already have. And then it just enhances it trying to change that whole routine.

Misha Montana 1:28:40

So luckily, though, I've gotten to a point where it's definitely under control, where it was not before I had major, and like the biggest mental breakdown of my entire life, like, I actually had, like some suicidal thoughts, which I've never had. And I've been open about that experience. So it's all a learning experience, and everything that I'm experiencing, I'm being honest about.

Misha Montana 1:29:12

So the other people that might feel some sense of shame in admitting what they're going through. They could have someone to relate to, or at least to sympathize a little bit with what's going on. Because a lot of people hear these

things and they're like, wow, like, you're batshit crazy. Or, you know, it's just simplified to that level. Like, nobody really looks at the whole picture.

Bill Gasiamis 1:29:38

As if they're not batshit crazy that they are so perfect that they see you as being batshit crazy and they compare themselves and they come out perfect, so it's like, no chance that right, everybody else is, "perfect" "normal" or doesn't have any issues and everything is alright. I think what's good about putting it all out there and talking about everything, every situation, every issue, every problem is that it makes you more and more relatable.

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:13

And it makes more and more people feel okay about themselves. Because there's so many taboos. And, when people are pretending that things aren't happening, they're making themselves really, really unwell. Even more and more, you know, when you're denying the reality of what's actually happening, because you're afraid. I think it just makes matters worse.

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:39

That's kind of why I do the podcast. It's just so that I can share how good bad, indifferent stuffed up normal, or abnormal I am. And it's like whatever. Yeah, whatever. It's okay. I'm not sure why I shouldn't tell you that I've had bad issues or thoughts or problems, I'm not sure why I shouldn't tell you like, why shouldn't I tell you that? And, and my parents, maybe they were a little bit cautious of what they revealed about themselves, that come from that generation, you know, they're in their 70s and late 70s.

Bill Gasiamis 1:31:25

And they came from that generation when there wasn't a lot said, but I don't live in that part of the world anymore. Or when that error anymore, I live in this modern era, and I'm going to just be what's appropriate now. And I don't think it's appropriate for anybody to not share. And if you are somebody who wants to share, and you're sharing to the wrong people, and they make you feel bad, choose different people to share to really, yeah, and screw them don't share to those people who are gonna make you feel bad about stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 1:31:59

So that's kind of what I found. And that's the hard part about doing a podcast is

now I'm sharing to everybody. And they haven't necessarily given me permission to share with them, but they become, either they become listeners, and fans, or they become the opposite of that. And they never pick up the podcast and listen again.

Bill Gasiamis 1:32:21

And that's how I filter them out. And that's so easy. Right? But even if you think that it's weird, if you think that people are nasty to people that hang out in your industry and work in your industry, they're even nasty to me. I have a stroke podcast, and they leave one star reviews.

Misha Montana 1:32:42

Really?

Bill Gasiamis 1:32:43

Yeah.

Misha Montana 1:32:46

But people are just nasty, miserable, horrible people. And I deal with it more obviously, you can imagine what I deal with on a daily basis. I get like death threats every day. And like all kinds, I mean, just like radical out there, horrible, obscene, nasty, just the most foul thing you could think of to say to someone, I hear it all day.

Misha Montana 1:33:17

And it's like, I read some of this stuff. And I'm just like, who taught you how to speak that way to anyone? By the way? I'm a stranger to you. How do you talk to people like that? But anyway, that's beside the point. But no, it's just it's so interesting to me to see. And I've gotten certain messages like I don't, so what I do is I don't respond, sometimes I'll read it, if I start seeing that it's gone in that direction. I just usually, like, yeet it out of my existence, like it's delete and ignore.

Misha Montana 1:33:49

Because I don't need that kind of energy in my life. Every once in a while I do and then like, some of them will make me so mad that I actually, like write something out to respond. And I've responded, responded in the past to some of these things. And I will tell you, like, there's nothing good that comes from it, because certain people are just looking for company in their misery.

Misha Montana 1:34:18

So, you know, if you get down to that level with them, the only thing that's going to do is hurt you at the end of the day. And so I just I try to block out any like that negative attention, or if I do respond to like, you know, I'm really sorry that someone hurt you, or I'm sorry that you're having a bad day and you feel are taking it out on me.

Misha Montana 1:34:41

And I do feel sorry for those people because to be at that level, where you're so miserable, that you feel the need to attack total strangers. Then imagine what kind of pain that they're going through in their life. And that's how I tried to have some sense of forgiveness for those people.

Take The Risk

Bill Gasiamis 1:35:00

I think what I hope we've done today actually is I hope we've shared another stroke story. And then given the opportunity to people to feel like they can be themselves, and also to feel like they can put themselves out there and take a risk to do something that they perhaps didn't ever had the guts to do before stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 1:35:23

And it maybe as full on as becoming an adult entertainer, it may be as something as simple as becoming an author and writing a book, to share your story or to help other people. And just put yourself out there and risk your worst fears becoming a reality, because the majority of the time, it's actually pretty good.

Bill Gasiamis 1:35:52

It's not as bad as you might imagine, in your head. And I had a lot of fear doing the podcast, because I was going to put myself out there. And I was at risk of being judged. And believe it or not, they judged they did they proved my fears, correct, you know, so I hope that we've done that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:36:13

I really want to thank you for reaching out and connecting to another stroke survivor and wanting to share your story, you're going to make a massive difference in a lot of people's lives in the way that they perhaps feel about their own challenges, health issues, stroke recovery. And I wish you all the best. And I

hope you're pulling one of those awards.

Misha Montana 1:36:40

Thank you. I'll let you know It's next week, we'll find out. So I'm excited. Thank you so much for having me. It truly like I said before, it means the world to me to have these conversations. So thank you so much. And thank you for sharing your story and for doing what you do because it truly truly makes a difference. So thank you for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:37:03

Well, thanks for joining us on today's episode. If you're watching on YouTube, leave a comment below. Subscribe hit the notification bell to get updates of new episodes as they become available. The more interactions with the show, and episodes the more the algorithm will push the episodes out to the people that need to see it and the greater the impact the interviews will make to them. Thanks again for being here and listening. I really appreciate you and I look forward to seeing you on the next episode.

Intro 1:37:34

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Intro 1:37:52

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Intro 1:38:14

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Intro 1:38:36

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Intro 1:38:56

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