

41. Stroke Of Luck - Farley Cadena

Farley Cadena | Stroke Of Luck

Farley Cadena is an actor and a stroke survivor who performs a one person show raising awareness about stroke.

Links mentioned in the interview:

<https://strokeofluck.info/>

Link to Netflix movie - My Beautiful Broken Brain

Highlights:

02:04 Farley's Ischemic stroke symptoms

08:19 The cat woke me up

15:58 Not enough rehabilitation after stroke

23:32 Finding the courage to sing again.

30:56 I'm not alright

42:40 Better changes

53:51 Live a happier life

Transcript:

Farley 0:00

Yeah, so I went to sleep that I we had a nice dinner and the family was here, you know, things seem to be calm. And suddenly I woke up about 2am and the cat woke me licking my face as if animals know something right? They're working on another level that we aren't, I think. And so the cat woke me. And suddenly I was just, it was like I, I can't actually can't really describe it.

Intro 0:32

This is recovery after stroke with Bill Gasiamis. Helping you go from where you are to where you'd rather be.

Bill 0:39

Well, Bill Gasiamis here from recoveryafterstroke.com and today I have with me, Farley Cadena, a stroke survivor, with an amazing way of raising awareness about stroke. Welcome, Farley.

Farley 0:54

Thank you. Thanks for having me, Bill. Actually, my last name is Cadena not (S)adena but good try. Everyone gets it wrong. anyway, I'm happy to be here.

Bill 1:07

Yeah. Thanks for being here. And welcome to tomorrow, by the way.

Farley 1:13

Yes, right. I know is that what tomorrow is going to be like? to know.

Bill 1:19

In, Australia, where tomorrow are today for you. So thanks for being here. And if it seems familiar in, you know, 24 hours or so don't freak out. It's not what happened to you. It's just what's going. Just normal.

Farley 1:36

Oh, good.

Bill 1:38

Hey, so tell me when I came across your profile, and had to look a little bit around on internet to see what did you do, I was really amazed. I was really surprised. And I was really thrilled, just with regards to the way that people are using their creativity to raise awareness about stroke. Tell me firstly what happened to you?

Farley's Ischemic stroke symptoms



Farley 2:04

Um, I had kind of a stressful year in 2017 and had some health problems and coming up on the day of the stroke about a week out I was having a lot of eye migraines where I would lose sight. I had been I had been a stressful year and I didn't tell my doctor about them. Although it had been something that had happened in my life.

Farley 2:34

The migraines know there'd been M.R.Is and no one was worried about them. They don't usually worry about eye migraines actually. So anyway, but they were happening a lot several times a day. And anyway, on December 17th, I got up in the morning sat down as on the couch, had the TV on and suddenly realize, I didn't know what was going on.

Farley 3:06

And I could tell the TV was on but I couldn't move. I couldn't talk. I couldn't pull myself out of it. I kept trying so so very hard to focus to, to just form something, you know, get a hold of myself. And I couldn't move and it felt like a long period of time. I mean, it felt like maybe that was 25 minutes of me sitting there.

Farley 3:39

And finally, my husband came out, he found me. And he could tell there was something very wrong and it and I seem to snap out of it. And he tried to talk to me and I wasn't sure if he was talking and I wasn't sure if I was talking and so I thought I was crazy.

Farley 3:58

I thought I literally had nothing crazy because it seems so strange. And I wasn't talking very well. And it took it took time my husband wanted me to go to the ER and I really resisted. And you know, nobody likes the ER the emergency room.

Farley 4:20

No one likes to go to the hospital. No one wants to go and you always want to think I'm fine, I'm fine, but I wasn't. And so I went to the ER and very quickly, they brought me in. They don't delay when something's clearly not speaking right. And by the time the MRI was done, not an MRI, I'm sorry, the CAT scan was done. They came quickly out and said you've had an ischemic stroke, which is the clot and on the left frontal lobe.

Farley 5:01

And it affects your speech reading comprehension I wasn't hearing right at that point either very confused and we took it from there you know, I ended up having to be in the hospital I didn't, want to go was very I think I was fairly difficult and I'm not usually typical person but and what was there a few days I had to have live procedures done it put a heart loop recorder and listen to my heart.

Farley 5:39

So it's in there now I'll be there for a few years. They did a TV which is to look for a hole behind your heart which they didn't find one. Great and which is good. And ultimately they sent me home after a few days. And then I had a really bad seizure in the middle of the night that night that I've gotten home so I had to go back and but didn't know is a seizure.

Farley 6:09

We thought it was a another stroke because people do have multiple strokes obviously. And anyway, it was the week before Christmas was really rough to have that everybody wants to be happy at Christmas and luckily I'm very organized person, everything was done. I had it was like well, good thing I stopped early.

Farley 6:33

And anyway, so I mean, that's roughly You know, it took a period of a week of total chaos. And And somehow, you know, and just, I was really just there was lots of staggering lots of really my speech was really poor couldn't read very discouraged.

Bill 7:01

Very familiar your story and I'm sure people listening will have experienced something very similar. So, you know, my story is very similar. Mine was some symptoms of numbness in my big left toe. And, like you I noticed this change and didn't do much about it. And then the numbness spread to the entire left side and I was also not interested in going to the hospital, you know, for seven days I kept avoiding it. You know.

Farley 7:33

Oh my gosh, seven days.? You waited seven days, Okay wow.

Bill 7:40

And you name it, I came up with every excuse as to why I shouldn't go to the

hospital and why I didn't want to go to the emergency room either. And it's very common. This is what we hear. We hear that it's the last thing you expect to happen.

Bill 7:53

And as a result of that, you can't really imagine yourself being at risk or You know, being at a point where something's gonna go drastically wrong. And then I came home from hospital as well. And after six weeks, I had another episode. You know, so that was pretty scary. So imagine you would have felt a little bit now a little bit more scared because of this second episode, like, what was that like?

My cat knew i was having a stroke

Farley 8:18

That was really dramatic. Because we were so relieved that I was home, you know? Yeah, so we went to sleep that night, we'd had a nice dinner and the family was here, you know, things seem to be calm. And suddenly I woke up about 2am and the cat woke me licking my face as if animals know something right?

Farley 8:19

They're working on another level that we aren't, I think, and so the cat woke me and suddenly I was just, it was like, I can't actually can't really describe it because it's it was for me, worse than the stroke and I was suddenly just pulling out of bed trying to get up. My husband was grabbing oh my gosh, what what's going on? What are you doing?

Farley 9:10

I fell out of bed, tried to grab the bookcase. I almost brought it down. I mean, it got really crazy. And I was speaking, I think nonsense, basically. And there was a moment very, quickly, I wasn't even aware of it. My husband had called 911 our emergency phone service here in the in the US.

Farley 9:36

And so suddenly there were people in my room and and I was trying to tell them what was going on. And I had this sense of in their eyes, I could see in their eyes that they didn't know what I was saying. That's a sort of like, oh my god.

Farley 9:58

something's really wrong. You know, they're trying to encourage me and they

taking me out of the house. And you know, that's where I kind of went hysterical because you know, you thought you were done. You thought you were home, hope it's okay. And my children are awake and they're freaking out, because what's happening in my mom and yeah, that was really that was the drama.

Bill 10:23

Yeah. And how old are the children?

Farley 10:25

They're older. They're 22 and 16. So, it's, I mean, I think in a way easier than if they were toddlers or something that was really terrifying for a tiny child to see. But, you know, I think it's hard. It's hard for the children to have any age just to see their mom who always sort of ran the show and takes care of everything.

Farley 10:54

In capable of, you know, speaking well did not getting their names, right. Not, you know, not being able to help them, you know, in any way. Yeah, yeah, it was pretty It was. It was intense. And and yeah. It's because I wrote down the memories of what happened. It's stayed very vivid because of the show I wrote.

Farley 11:22

I have so much of it as

Farley 11:25

you know, when I read about it, I read it and talk about it. I use it in journal, and it's just fresh. I mean, you know, it's just like, actors talk about sense memory. I have a lot of sense memory. And this week, is it because I recorded my stories about it very quickly after it happened.

Bill 11:46

Yeah, so we're recording in January 2019. When did you experience the stroke?

Farley 11:53

It was the end of 2017. So in December, and so that's like 13 months. ago.

Bill 12:00

Yeah, so it's really fresh period is really fresh.

Farley 12:05

Exactly, yeah. It's I realized just I had to get a new doctor recently at a new

insurance. And I started to have sort of like a mild kind of panic attack because just going to the doctor, I know about you, but I mean, just going even, even if they're a wonderful doctor. It's that okay. You know, it's usually good news, you know, but it's hard. It's hard still, like you just, it all kind of rushes back sometimes. And you're kind of not in control of that. That panic.

Bill 12:44

Yeah. Did you think that your mortality ever before that event?

Farley 12:51

I'm not that deeply. No, I would say know that. There were a lot of serious conversations that were had in our house. After that, yeah, it you know, and I'm not a religious person. But it's Yeah, it's a very profound thing to face, you know, your body and just not working, you're out of control of all of it.

Farley 13:21

And I think we all like to think we're in control of some of it, but not so much. And, you know, when your body malfunctions like that, you're in. You're so vulnerable and, you know, with the doctors and everything, it's just saying, Please help me, you know, take care of me.

Farley 13:43

And, you know, you're trusting you know that you've got good care. I mean, because really, you don't pick when when you have that emergency, you're just hoping there's some good people on call, right. I mean, they, of course, I've had nothing but good care. Just that's a lot of trust. It's a lot of trust. So yeah,

Bill 14:04

It's a lesson in life isn't isn't a lesson about, okay. Well, you know, I can't control this. This is not about me anymore. It's about the people who are there who are trained, you know, who are specifically, you know, turn up every day to help people like me and you gotta go, you gotta go with faith, you know?

Bill 14:23

So if you're not, if you're not religious, well, here's an opportunity to practice faith of any kind. I'm not sure what kind of faith in something or someone or higher power, what do you got? You got no choice.

Farley 14:36

Right? You have no choice. It's out of your hands right now. Yeah. So it after the stroke happened. We had all kinds of insurance trouble. And it turned out I couldn't get any speech therapy. I had. Literally, no, so that was part of my work to get better. That like well I'm an actress, I know what to do.

Farley 15:03

I'm just gonna start reading. And I'm going to force myself I know it was very hard. So I started reading out loud as much as I could, as much as I could take it. It was very frustrating. I didn't even understand what I was reading I was really stuttering and you know.

Farley 15:20

And then slowly, people kept saying your story so interesting, you know, because I had all these crazy people I met in the hospital, there were just all these funny things that happened and people kept saying, you should write this down. You should write this down. And I got I did. And so this was all my therapy instead of hat. So it's funny that what a wonderful thing happened on the way to not getting speech therapy was that I, I created my own work and then did this show, the show was done 10 months after my stroke.

Not enough rehabilitation offered after stroke



Bill 15:58

We'll talk we'll talk about that in a minute because I really want to dive into that, but what I love. What I love is, I had a similar experience in that, you know. And it's not only you and me, lots of people go home after stroke and they're left with nothing, Not enough rehabilitation, not enough speech therapy and not enough of what it is that we need.

Bill 16:22

And it's such a I'm not sure if I've ever really sworn on my podcast before, but it's such a shitty thing that insurance companies do in a time of greatest need, where they decide that they're not going to fund something like speech therapy, which I think is criminal. It's just irresponsible and criminal.

Farley 16:42

I was my husband was on the phone, trying to talk to the people who were basically blocking this from happening. And I was in the background while he's crying. Yeah, you know, was quite a sad moment. And yeah, It was really awful. It was really awful.

Farley 17:07

And I, and it was there was no shaming them, like they're just not gonna do it, they were not going to do it and it just seemed so beyond belief that that was happening. And so yeah, I think when you you say that so there's so many of us don't have the tools afterwards and people get depressed. right because, you know, now what do I do? I don't just sit here and, you know, watch TV and you know, you know, close my little world up and because that's sort of what you want to do. It's a sad period.

Bill 17:48

And it's interesting. Some people are not lucky as us when they have their experience with stroke where they don't have that ability to do what you do to just go with your instinct and and follow You know, what you know, from training that didn't seem in any way relevant to a recovery from stroke, you know, when you were studying to be an actor.

Bill 18:12

And now all of a sudden you're saying, Okay, how can I use what I've learned in the past and rearrange it and manipulate it to actually help me in this other part of my life? Which I never thought that that's why I ever became an actor.

Farley 18:26

Yeah, yeah. It. Yeah, it was it was like, a sort of didn't plan that it was therapy. I mean, it. It just became the therapy and to decide to do something to have this goal, to do a thing that you actually don't know that you can do. Because I really wasn't ready to do it. When I decided to do it. I couldn't read I saying I couldn't read music anymore. Like what was I thinking? Right. Yeah, I wasn't reading

What was I thinking? But you know, I think the act of setting a goal was was that the help that pulls you out of the the depression? I have something to do. You know, I have some I have something to work for. And that was that was huge. Yeah.

Bill 19:22

Tell me about. So you're in that space now you decided you're going to start reading and are you doing that at home? Are you doing it with no other resources other than just the book? Is that how you did it? Or did you listen to books? or How did you

Farley 19:37

why what listening was kind of hard. It's as if it was too much information. I was reading paragraph by paragraph like. At first it was just sentence by sentence. I could read a sentence and then it was almost like I wanted to shut my eyes. It's just too much, too much.

Bill 20:00

Was it hurting your brain?

Farley 20:02

It's almost it's almost that Yeah. And I really never talked about that before how my reaction to reading was just like I it was like, a sting or something. I was like, ah, and so but I was, you know, I'm such a busy person, an active person in the, you know, and social person.

Farley 20:24

All my friends gather I mean, I had, you know, the arts community, the performing arts community, especially, I'm well known in Southern California and in the theater community, so people just, they're like, we're coming over. So people were talking to me a lot. And that helped.

Farley 20:44

For and this the love of that, that just that people were like, we're not going to let this happen to you like this is not okay. So and people are shocked because I 51 years old and people were shocked that that's how Young to them and I look young for my age. So people think what you know, how can this be happening?

Farley 21:07

So, anyway, but the reading was really slow and I remember this. I thought I'm going to read subtitles like on movies like that's gonna be good. Except that the first movie I picked was subtitled I think in French so I'm so I'm hearing French and seeing the English subtitles and my brain just went bad I can't It was too much.

Bill 21:40

You really tried to make it difficult for yourself, didn't you?

Farley 21:43

Right? I was like my always going to have to put things at like, turn it up to 11 you know why what's crazy? So, yeah, I always made it a little too hard. So that's a good that can't we can't do that. But any chance I got I would read and I would also try to read out loud, too.

Farley 22:07

So first was just trying to read with just my eyes, you know, just trying to get through that and then bravely out loud. And but the music thing was interesting because the music part of it was a music director actually contacted me and said, You should be singing, you should be singing immediately.

Farley 22:29

And it was overwhelming to me because I'm always afraid to try because it would have shattered me at that moment. If some if it didn't go well. I couldn't I couldn't sing this simplest song. So I avoided that and then I had more and more friends that you really should be singing this is going to help you This is going to help you and I finally did.

Farley 22:54

And it did help obviously. And I've read some interesting stories about This, people doing this work for stroke victims. This is a real therapy where they sing and suddenly they can sing. words come out perfectly. And they had no idea they had that capability at that moment.

Bill 23:13

Yeah. Because it's a different part of the brain that activates the singing than the part that, you know, that was lost, you know, or what has gone offline during the aftermath of the stroke. Yeah. And I don't know what they're called. So Dr. People don't say this is this. I don't know what it's called. I just says it's a different part

of the brain.

Farley finds the courage to sing again.



Farley 23:32

I'm not a doctor. I just know it works. Exactly. So that was that was really special when I finally just had the, you know, the courage to try that to say, that was exciting. And it felt good. Of course, I couldn't read music. So it had to be something I already knew, or that I'd known for years and years and years. Something Deeply inbred embedded in the back of my memories.

Farley 23:49

And then, and then I slowly was poor actually for my show. And when I did it, I had to learn by ear. My hearing was good enough to learn by ear at that point. And but looking at the music because that you know, for those part I mean, for people who have any even the tiniest bit of musical training, they know that we've got lots of dots here we've got lots of lines.

Farley 24:24

The words separated into syllables with dashes. And my even though I've been reading music My whole life. I you know, again, it was like.

Bill 24:48

Sensory overload yeah,

Farley 24:49

Totally. Totally. So I was like, well, we're learning by ear then cuz that I can't do.

Bill 24:54

Yeah. So that's interesting. It's really interesting because a lot of people who will

live We'll have had training in one of the arts somewhere, somewhere. So, you know, this is great that we're sharing this because then, you know, perhaps we're creating opportunities for people to think of, you know, a version of their own therapy that, that works for them, and they can go for it. You know, why not? I love that. Yes.

Farley 25:20

Yes, I know, I think I think you have to think you can't just expect that if you do get, you know, some good therapy, but you can't just expect to just do that therapy when you go there every Tuesday or whatever. If you're at that point where you're home and you're having to go to therapy. There's more to it than that, obviously, you you there's you have to meet is to meet that yourself. There's the willingness to kind of go beyond and that's how I mean, that's really how I got better so quickly, I think,

Bill 25:57

yeah, I was interviewed. It's true. When I was interviewed on a podcast yesterday, and I spoke about what it was that helped me in my recovery, etc, and it was that responsibility for your own recovery as well not just, you know, outsourcing that to doctors and people that doctors and nurses that they're good at doing what they do inside a hospital, that's where they work in.

Bill 26:20

It doesn't continue outside that's other people's tasks. And whether they're supplying that by the insurance company or not, you can still support your own recovery. And it's similar to what I did you know, I, I was meditating during the time when I was waiting to learn to walk again. So I was at rehab, I had to learn how to walk again, my left side was offline.

Bill 26:42

So we needed to bring it back online. And by the time they assessed you and give you the go ahead to do certain exercises, because they're, of course concerned about your well being and that you're not going to fall over and hurt yourself. And I had brain surgery. So you know, that was very sensitive, you know, situation with my head.

Bill 27:03

And the last thing we needed was another hit. Right? I was imagining myself walk

because, you know studies is is showing, and research is showing that when you imagine yourself doing something, it activates the same parts of the brain as if you're actually doing that task. Yeah, so I gave myself three days head start on the walking. And when I got there, it was not unfamiliar. It was familiar.

Farley 27:33

Wow that's amazing.

Bill 27:35

Yeah, it's brilliant, right? So it's similar to what you're saying. And, again, I didn't have to be anywhere to do that. I could have just, I did that on my own. I went to YouTube, I downloaded a meditation background music, but just allow that to, you know, help guide me.

Bill 27:48

And I did a healing meditation and all these tasks that we can do that take 10 or 20 minutes or as long as you want it to as long as as long as you know. We have that additional, you know, amount of energy and then right have a risk, but that's a big, that's a big deal for healing. Yeah. Between in between sessions.

Farley 28:11

Did you have the experience of sort of getting better and then kind of getting worse and getting like that for me with my speech? Like, I'd have a great day and I think oh, well, one the clear now. And then the next three weeks, I would could barely speak. And I was I was thought out. Well, later on, I think I realized it was sort of fatigue. Like I was pushing too hard. And then just my brain was like, sorry, you're gonna stutter for the next few weeks.

Bill 28:43

Yeah, settle down. Yeah, look, I did. Yeah, I still do that. Now. I'm, you know, 2000. November 28 2014 was my surgery. So it's, you know, it's four years ago, and I still have those days. You know, where we have A really good amount of output and volume of work and productivity, whatever you want to call it. And then and then something just says not, you've done too much.

Bill 29:09

We're going to take it from there one and the brain stops working and everything stops. Yes. And you just have to retreat and you have to go back. And you have to observe and you have to rest in it. You have to allow for healing, because our

brains are not the same as they were before they are back. They're traumatized. You know. So those little traumas come back and sort of say, Hey, you know, I'm here. Just take it easy. I'm a bit sensitive, you know, give me a break.

Farley 29:35

Yeah, I need extra time. In the morning, so to speak. Well, you know, some mornings are really you know, the words don't quite come out. And

Bill 29:51

Is your husband cheeky like my wife? Does he do the, get it out, spit it out to you?

Farley 29:57

No, but he can now tease me a little it like I, you know when I say some I because I come out with the wrong words for things on a regular basis and he can laugh about that because now it's funny was it wasn't funny before but now it is it's funny and yeah, who knows what I'll say?

Bill 30:20

You gotta laugh You have to laugh I mean if you don't laugh, you become really, you can become really down and was that point being down about it?

Farley 30:27

And nobody wants to be around that either it's hard to help a person who's that sad and yeah, that I think was I think that was the hardest time where those first few months for my poor family you know having to you know, just cheer me up i think i think was hard. Yeah. And I wanted everyone to think I was okay. Like there was really so important and such pride like I'm going to be fine, fine, I'm fine. But you know, I wasn't.

I'm not alright

Bill 30:56

I know, I know. We protect the trumpets. I loved ones, you know, try and make them feel that, you know, don't worry too much, you know, I'll be right and all that type of thing. And it's a good reminder for people to sort of some sort sometimes say, you know what, I'm actually not alright today. And today I need help. And today I can't speak properly.

Bill 31:16

And for me what you said is really interesting because I have walking is a little bit harder for me in the morning so I'm a very good morning person I prefer the morning than the evening. But the the leg has to warm up, you know, it has to start to remember what to do to make me feel less wobbly on my feet. So that's interesting what you say about your speech is kind of slower in the morning and it has to wake up.

Farley 31:46

Yes, definitely. And and also just, and if I'm in a tense situation, something that like today with the doctor, I my speech was helped halting and I thought was a new doctor, though. A new doctor. And I was nervous and had to tell my, you know, my story and she had lots of questions and technical question. The dates and I had to find was like, so that was a little challenging.

Farley 32:17

And I thought what, what's happening with me today? So, yeah, that sort of that vulnerable, tense kind of thing. That's, that's, that's hard. Yeah. So, but that's okay. That's all it is, you know. So you gotta, you gotta say, Well, I came this far. So, yeah, it's a detail.

Bill 32:41

You know, what I like about your home remedy for you and your speech therapy was that when you started, you had a really great idea of where you were at. And then as you continued, you notice yourself getting better and better, and that would have encouraged you. How long did it take for you to feel like hey, we've got This we're back.,

Farley 33:04

I think, you know, it's funny, I wrote the show fairly quickly. I knew what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to tell the story. The story is told in flashbacks, and then in the present, we kind of go all over in time in my life. So it's not just this sad story. Right? I didn't wanted that to be it to be just a sad story about a girl had a stroke.

Farley 33:37

And so, and it needed to have, you know, some some something special about it. And because everyone does have here we all do one people, one person shows, I mean, it's kind of a dime, a dozen, you know, in Hollywood, there's like, Oh, no, not another one of those shows. So I knew I had to be unique.

Farley 33:56

So um, but I had this kind of just kind of came To me, and I had some friends who helped me kind of refine the ideas to absolutely and until it came out really quick, and but I had to work on it. We worked on it slowly, at least by theater standards slowly, from March until October I performed it in October.

Farley 34:25

I did two performances at a really nice theater in the Hollywood area. So, uh, so it but you know, you say When did I know I was back, I actually was sure it was going to be disaster. And I would show it was just, what am I doing? Why have I it's sold out. It's sold out most shows. I was like, This is ridiculous.

Farley 34:51

I am going to be a disaster. And the people who are closest to the show had to kind of it's really great, It's wonderful. Fantastic. But I was pretty sure it was going to be a disaster. And of course it wasn't. So I don't think I knew I was really back until I did it.

Bill 35:11

Yeah. Brilliant.

Farley 35:12

I needed to know because Yeah, I mean, I just needed to get to that goal. And then once we did get there, and the response to the show was overwhelming and overwhelming. So then we're then people said, well, we're doing it again, right?

Farley 35:37

Sure. And we were, like, not quite prepared to do it again. I mean, we want it we I mean, it sounded like a great idea, of course, but we weren't quite ready. So hence the photoshoots and the website and they know that the work that has to be done if you're going to be taking a thing out and about, you know, You have to be ready to do that. So yeah so so but the I did not know I was really back until that night and and I was very concerned about singing and losing my place and not knowing but you know what's funny is I've been I've been performing my whole life so there is something that kicks into gear if something doesn't doesn't go right. I knew like that part of me knew what to do. Yeah, you know knew how to handle it and

Farley 36:33

and people know I had a stroke what whether they want perfection? Of

Farley 36:39

course not.

Farley 36:41

Of course not. If that's the charm of it, you see,

Bill 36:44

yeah, let's go and watch this weird lady muck up and mumble.

Farley 36:48

People didn't know what to expect. People were coming going.

Farley 36:54

Okay, I don't know what's gonna happen tonight. But we were what might happen. Producer who's a lovely, dear dear friend, had the good sense to reach out to the medical community in our area. So we had Kaiser Permanente coming out. The UCLA Medical Center out here a bunch of different places and doctors came out, stroke victims came out. And that's what really mattered was what did they think? And they left it. And so that's where the next phase of it is. Because there's an audience of regular people that want to see it, but, but my heart is like here like you, you you, you like I want to help the other people who come through this, like me, in my own way I want to help and, and educate and do something a little different. Yeah. And so Yeah.

Bill 38:01

For me it's a little bit cathartic as well. I feel every time I do an episode every time I share my story every time somebody says are the great episode or I'm looking forward to listening to the podcast. It feels like it's helping me heal. Do you get that? Is that what you experience?

Farley 38:20

Absolutely, absolutely. it's um it's, you know, it's such a journey. That doesn't end it. It's it's like, you added this whole nother chapter to your life that's actually sort of taking over your life he had, you know what I mean? Like one day you had a stroke and everything changed forever. Like that.

Farley 38:48

And I think that's why I called it stroke of luck because you know, there's some insight into life that I was given and have before and you know, I just feel really lucky to be here anyway. But yeah, it's uh i don't know. It says it's I, I love what you're doing and I'm, so glad that we could kind of show the different facets of what can be done once you go through this life changing moment.

Farley 39:24

You don't have to be like, ashamed of it. I actually had a couple of friends who have had some issues health issues. One was a small stroke and one was another and they don't want people to know their high profile enough people that they think will hurt their their career if people find out and I believe me, I get that. I get that because it's changed my career forever.

Farley 39:55

I don't think I can memorize the script. Maybe, maybe not this year, though. I don't think sure you know. So. But you know, you find, look, it's nice to find a way to say, Well, my life changed one day. And now I have a really beautiful life because of it. Who knew? Yeah. And it's something I can share. That helps other people. Yeah, I think that's what it's about maybe, huh?

Bill 40:27

Well, I don't know. Sometimes I talk about it as being you know, one of the best things that ever happened to me, I know a lot of people are going through a really tough of version of stroke recovery and way more impacted. So I know that I get it if they can't say that.

Bill 40:43

And I almost feel obliged is the wrong word, because it sort of makes it like I'm forced to do this, but I'm not but I almost feel like a responsibility to actually do this because of the fact that I got away with it. So lightly In my opinion, now, my family wouldn't say that and everyone else wouldn't.

Bill 41:04

But I think I did. So, part of the sharing for me is, you know, it's cathartic, but also important because of that massive gap that exists that you experience and that I experienced in going home. And then it's like, what do we do? And we need, I needed tools. And I needed somebody to tell me things and I didn't know where to go and who to go to.

Bill 41:28

So I sought out, you know, the best doctors in the world. And one of my favorite interviews and they're all amazing. One of my favorite interviews was an interview I did with Dr. Michael Merzenich a little earlier on in the series around 20. I think it is. And, you know, he's the world's leading researcher in the field of neuroscience and in the brain training and the ability to grow new neural pathways.

Bill 41:45

You know, he started his work 20 years ago, and he is renowned for that space and he supports people to re-learn things to overcome things, all sorts of brain dramas that you know, people experience, not just stroke. And not enough people know about him and not enough people know about what he's proven and what he's shown, you know, you could take an 80 year old person who's experiencing the most serious brain challenges and you can retrain them.

Bill 42:22

And sometimes it only depends on you know, how much time and effort that you put into it, rather than, you know how old or young they are. So, that doesn't cost anything and people need to know this. So I really love how you have got to that point, and you created this thing now that your career is changed forever.

Better changes after having a stroke



Bill 42:40

And let me tell you, the people who are going to relate to you now are not going to be the people who were relating to you before who thought there was a great character, etc. They're still going to be there. But then there's going to be this

whole world of other people who are looking for role models and are looking for stroke recovery role models and they are going to come into your, you know, to your world and they're going to go. Well, she was amazing before she's even more amazing now.

Bill 43:08

And that's going to enhance your career. And it's not do anything negative to it. And I get that people are concerned about, you know, how it's going to influence them influence the people that they work with about their career. But, you know, Sharon, Sharon Stone had a stroke. No one talks about her badly.

Farley 43:27

No, of course not. And I think people need help. I mean, when you're, I was at a stroke support group last week, and and the people I was talking to, had just, they were still in the hospital, you know, and they needed help so much. They just needed to talk to someone and said, Well, what happened to you and, and well, this happened to me and and did you feel this Did you feel that you know of course everybody's strokes are so different.

Farley 44:04

But it made him smile just like you could feel like like lighten their low because this person right here talking to them it had a stroke and they're okay. You know, so um, yeah, it's it's so that they're in there, there's a whole network of people that I've, I've now met who do this kind of work where they go to different hospitals and and they do stroke support groups and that's it's beautiful and and it means so much it means so much to people.

Bill 44:41

One of my task is to go and talk about stroke as a stroke ambassador for our Stroke Foundation in Australia. And that makes a massive difference to see people completely change and come alive and thank you and come and share and tell you this story because everyone else's That they meet doesn't get it most people don't get it. How can they we don't want them to get it, but how can they possibly understand what it's like to all of a sudden not be able to talk speak?

Bill 45:14

Your whole identity is being challenged. And you know, and it wasn't your choice, so people don't get it. So, so it's great what you're doing. I'm curious, though.

Can we go back just a little bit? I'm just trying to get a bit of a feel for what it was like that year before the stroke. You said you had a really tough year is something that you could talk about.

Farley 45:39

I can you're going to laugh, but it's real. The fact that Donald Trump was elected, as our president was very stressful in our little family, My husband is Mexican American, third generation, but he had to travel back and forth for his job to Mexico City and back. And this was a stressful thing to have brown skin in America at that moment in time and still at this moment in time.

Farley 46:27

I know it sounds strange.

Bill 46:28

No it doesn't at all.

Farley 46:30

But it so what we were dealing with was we were both I'm sure our children took it on to we were stressed out just stressed and I think, you know, I am such an I've such a empathy, I've said I absorb so much and that's probably what makes me a good performer and actress so I take it all in and, and for us here, for those of us who are have our eyes wide open about what's happening in America right now, every day is a barrage of news that you cannot believe is happening.

Farley 47:18

And, and I mean yeah, so that's so so 2017 really from the election was 2016. So November through Yeah. So it was about a year of that stress and it just felt like everything was building and building and building and my I even went into the hospital in March of 2017, where they thought I had a heart attack. My heart was having a lot of extra beats, but that which isn't actually that much of a problem.

Farley 47:54

I found out from the cardiologist. He's like, Oh, that's no big deal. But I had, they did Know what was wrong at first and I had my blood work came out weird and I had a weird EKG. I mean, so everybody thought I had a heart attack and then you know having these weird migraines. So it was I just it just felt like each month of the year was just escalating and escalating. And then it says left my brain just went poof right. So much so much.

Farley 48:28

A lot of my friends have said so are you what do you do to not you know how you get past that? You know, and I think people thought I was keeping it inside but I wasn't that was very vocal about how stressed I found this whole thing to be. It doesn't. It wasn't that I was holding it all in it but it just yeah, it was stressful. So it still is who we who are we kidding?

Bill 48:58

You still is I get it. I had done An interesting conversation with an expat American. He lives in Australia now who was talking about how Donald Trump was such a pig and the way that he treats women amongst every other person on the planet. And, and she was, she said something which was really interesting and you reminded me of that. And she said, this makes me so mad. I could just burst she said.

Farley 49:27

Yeah, there you go.

Bill 49:28

And and I felt the only thing I could say to her was like, let's see if we can you know, reframe that way that you feel and maybe do something else don't burst. Because, you know, let's not let somebody else impact you that badly. And, of course, I never imagined that there could be somebody like you who felt that stressed out about it. I live in Australia.

Bill 49:54

We don't have that level of stupidity in our government. Although government is pretty stupid. We have, you know, we have a lot of uneducated people making decisions about who should run the country, we do have that then they don't know enough about politics. They don't know enough about the implications of the decisions they're making, you know, so I get why some of those people get to power.

Bill 50:22

And I never, however, would have imagined that I could find somebody who was directly concerned about somebody becoming a president, because of the situation that you find yourself in. And I think it's said that this idiot doesn't understand the negative connotations of what he's doing amongst, you know,

amongst the people who are supposedly he's there to lead.

Farley 50:51

He works for us It's hard to tell.

Bill 50:56

That's my politics. That's my politics thing and Yeah, I just love that you said that. I love that you said that. I don't love that you're going through that. But I love that you said that because Isn't that amazing? What makes people feel sick and unwell?

Farley 51:10

Yeah. Well, right. I mean, I think we can make ourselves sick. And, stress is a real, insidious kind of thing. And I don't think we always realize what we're doing to ourselves. A good friend of mine just recently thought he, he'd had he'd had a toothache and he thought he needed to have antibiotics. If it hit maybe you need to get root canal, he's having all these problems.

Farley 51:44

And no one could find what was wrong. And then finally, finally, finally, they realized he was just clenching his teeth because he was so stressed out you know, so you just you're unconsciously hurting yourself. Sometimes when something difficult, you dealing with it, you think you're dealing with it.

Farley 52:06

But you're not. And and, and sometimes we get real a real rude awakening as to how hard working on ourselves. So you know, you do need to find those breaks where you just have fun and you let go and you don't think of it is at all possible to not think about the thing that is driving you insane right now.

Farley 52:34

Not everybody has the luxury of getting away from their stress sometimes, you know, but yeah, it was a real lesson. It was shocking and I think there were people who didn't like that I said that. I discuss it lightly in my show. I try not to be too heavy handed about it, because I want the show to be for everyone. And, and so but yeah, it was real. And I think people wanted to dismiss it a little bit. Whoo hoo, hoo hoo like him? You know,

Bill 53:13

of course they do because they don't. They don't want to feel like they've made a decision, you know, that's negatively impact people that people are genuinely mostly, you know, good heart and that I want to feel like it's a decision that they made might have negative connotations, you know, that's not what they want. Yeah.

Farley 53:29

Yeah, I know. And I know that there have been times I've said things that you know about, about this whole climate and that makes me really angry that people who I love would have, you know, voted for him and you know, and it hurts people's feelings.

Live a happier life



Farley 53:51

Hurt my feelings too I give me a stroke? So I don't know. It's hard for me to feel too bad if your feelings are hurt, but yeah, it's it's been an interesting road just dealing with that weird part of it, and trying to learn how to just find a way to live a happier life in this, despite all of it, all this stuff that's swirling around us.

Bill 54:18

I think I think it's possible. I'm curious, what do you do now to keep yourself a little bit less stress a little bit calmer? Do you do some meditation and some yoga? Have you taken any other practices on that you didn't do in the past?

Farley 54:29

And well, actually, we got a dog which is, which is a great kind of therapy dog. They're just I don't know, he's just a big, lovable, wonderful dog and the walking with Him and playing with him and teaching him training him.

Farley 54:50

That's been a great focus. can take some because it forces you to take your mind like it with your children, right? You have to think about somebody else. You have to take your mind off this weird thing that you know, all they really need is attention and some treats and they could walk away. And and you know and and the cuddle with you and you're like oh yeah, that's that's actually more important. Yeah and so that is funny.

Bill 55:21

Yeah but what does the cat think about that?

Farley 55:23

Well that the poor cat I know our poor cat passed away. Oh, so I know the cat that saved me right it was very sad he he a coyote and a cat met and the cat isn't survive. Yeah, I know really high. We have a lot of big coyote problem here. Yeah.

Bill 55:48

I really have heard that I listened to people's podcasts from all over the world. And yeah, one of the ones I listened to is a guy called Joe Rogan you may or may not know is Joe Rogan. And he talked about you want to visit episodes about the massive creative problem in California.

Farley 56:03

Yes, it's bad. It's bad. And whereas when we first moved into this particular house, we had two cats at the time. And there were cats everywhere all around in our neighborhood there was there's just print, but now there are no cats outside at all. And yeah, the other cat died of just a old age. But But this cat, he was only six. So yeah, it was a coyote and we, and I won't I won't go into detail, but we go with a coyote.

Bill 56:42

We hold that cut. Do you know from now on

Farley 56:45

Exactly our sweet, sweet cat who Yeah, he definitely was was the one like wake up Mommy, wake up.

Bill 56:53

Love that story. That's amazing. So tell me a little bit about the format of the show. As we sort of wrap up just a We get a bit of an understanding of Yeah, how

it's performed and why people should come and see it.

Farley 57:06

Oh, yes, well, the show opens. It feels like a cabaret act. It opens, I'm singing, I started singing and I'm talking to people and making a joke jokes about the stroke and you don't expect me to memorize it. Do you know I've got this journal and, and we get almost to the end of the first song.

Farley 57:32

And basically, I'm interrupted by the stroke. So it's like a show that gets interrupted by a stroke, whoa, and I relive it in the first person, what like what's going on inside my head? And I try to describe it to the audience from the first person point of view.

Farley 57:55

And, and so what happens throughout the show is actually slip in and out of it and I go, I go back in, back into, you know, telling people about my childhood and how I, how I grew up. And then and then there are moments of vulnerability where I slip back and now I start talking about the hospital and how it got to the hospital.

Farley 58:17

And everything's very much in the first person as is it as if it's happening to me in the moment. And then I flip, flip back into a memories of a good times, or funny times or so it's it's very much like a show interrupted by a stroke. That's how I kind of describe it.

Farley 58:40

And at the as we get towards the end, I talked about how, how I got better and how much it meant to me, because so many of the people who came to see the first shows were the people who helped me get better who came to my house.

Farley 59:00

So I definitely talk about how much that meant to me and we intersperse it with lots of wonderful songs that I love to sing and songs that I actually learned specifically for the show. Anyway, I think it's I think people definitely cry when they see the show, but they but there's a lot of laughter in the show too.

Farley 59:27

And it's a it's a big, warm, fuzzy thing at the end. I think people feel really good as

they leave. And I had nothing but just wonderful. You know, wonderful, overwhelmingly positive comments that as people have seen it, so we'll do it again in theaters.

Farley 59:50

But, but first I think we want to spend part of the year I'm working on getting it out to More stroke patients and the medical community, there's been some interest at me coming to national conferences for some of the insurance groups. So we'll see if we can work that out. And then once we kind of know where those things are gonna fall, then we'll slip in some theater dates.

Bill 1:00:23

Anyone out anyone from Netflix watching or listening? We need to add this to the repertoire because my beautiful broken brain is on Netflix. And have you ever watched it and it's a first? Yeah, so it's called my beautiful broken brain. And it's a first account of somebody experiencing a brain trauma and then doing the explaining of what's happening in their head. And you can imagine the visual aspect of TV and how they can fuzz you know, make things fuzzy and you know, being made

Farley 1:01:01

I had no idea that was on Netflix. Oh my gosh, I have to just see that.

Bill 1:01:06

Wow. So this is a massive Netflix plug because you know, I'm sure my episodes go to thousands of thousand people. So Netflix, get on it.

Farley 1:01:13

Oh yeah, I'm right here.

Bill 1:01:16

Yes. So my beautiful broken brain whoever's listening, it's worth watching this. Yeah, this episode goes worldwide and we can all get to your show in short, if we could we sell out so many of them. Ah,

Farley 1:01:31

Well, you know, maybe it may be that in the near future, we'll be able to release a little, maybe some some pieces of the recordings of the show. We'll see. We'll see what I can do.

Farley 1:01:44

Let's say we're working on it.

Bill 1:01:46

Well, I'm, you know, I, what if I said to you, three years ago, you know, one day Farley, you'll be doing an amazing job raising awareness about stroke. Well, how that would that conversation have gone

Farley 1:02:04

What now? It would be I would be stunned. Yeah, absolutely stunned. Yeah. It's like yeah, it's like the life turned completely upside down for sure. I had no idea. This is where the direction we were going.

Bill 1:02:24

And I don't wish it on anybody. I'm almost kind of glad that you had a stroke. Like, I know that sounds weird, but you no, I'm not. I'm not really but I'm glad that a person like you can have a stroke and then turn it into something amazing. That's probably a better way to say it. Because I don't want anyone to have a stroke.

Farley 1:02:42

Right. No, I think that there's I there's just something to feel good about. You know, I conquered something. And I came out the other side. better, stronger, smarter, more joyful. I'm more thankful. You know, so many of those things are people people don't have that every day. Right? And so because this horrible thing happened, I was able to turn something, you know, it's like this this. It shouldn't have turned out well, it shouldn't be good news, but it was.

Bill 1:03:24

Yeah. On that beautiful note falli Cadena?

Farley 1:03:30

Yes, yes, you got it.

Bill 1:03:31

Thank you so much for being on the podcast. I truly appreciate it. I am so thankful to have come across your work and what you do. I am definitely looking forward to some time at some point. Seeing the show. I'm not sure how we're going to do that. But you know, from time to time, I do crazy things like fly to the United

States, even though Donald Trump's there.

Farley 1:03:52

You have to tell me okay, Yeah, well, we'll get some people together and we'll do this for you.

Bill 1:04:00

Beautiful tell me where can people go and look up the, your website and get tickets?

Farley 1:04:07

Right? Well, we can't get tickets quite yet but they can go to my website. It's strokeofluck.info. That's it stroke of luck dot info. And I also have my own personal website and farleycadena.com too you can find me there.

Farley 1:04:25

Um, and if there's anybody who wants to book the show, I have an email. It's actually on the stroke of luck website. It's booking at strokeofluck.info. So if someone says, Hey, I want this, I want to book this show from my theater or my medical conference. Easy,

Bill 1:04:47

That's it that is beautiful. such an amazing thing. And, you know, maybe I can get you to come to Australia.

Farley 1:04:55

Oh, I think you could twist my arm. That sounds really good. That's sounds really good a great vacation.

Bill 1:05:02

I might have to add, I might have to add promoted to my repertoire.

Farley 1:05:08

My agent in Australia

Bill 1:05:14

So lovely to talk to you. Thank you so much and I look forward to following your work.

Farley 1:05:19

Oh, thank you. Thank you so much. I enjoyed my time today it was great to meet you.

Intro 1:05:25

Discover how to support your recovery after stroke. Go to recoveryafterstroke.com