

Stroke Recovery interview with Bill Gasiamis

Bill Gasiamis was recently interviewed by Gaymarie Mino who has recently begun telling stroke recovery stories on her YouTube channel.

Guide to Surviving Stroke and Brain Injury

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Transcript:

Introduction - Stroke Recovery with Bill Gasiamis



Gaymarie Mino 0:00

Welcome back to a guide to surviving a stroke and brain injury. Today we have the pleasure of having Bill Gasiamis with us. Before I get started, I would like to thank you again, Bill and I had an earlier date about three weeks ago to do this, and I had technology problems.

Gaymarie Mino 0:24

So he was gracious enough to reschedule with me and today is our second attempt. Now, there are no guarantees, but here we go. So little info on Bill. He became a stroke survivor in 2012, at the age of 37, right? And he has three brain bleeds. I know it's hard to believe, but three brain bleeds in three years, right?

Gaymarie Mino 0:52

In November of 2014, Bill underwent surgery on his brain. He had to learn how to walk again, and we'll get into that later, but he likes to share his incredible story of recovering as a stroke ambassador with others to raise awareness and help similar stroke survivors and their families.

Gaymarie Mino 0:52

He didn't feel he was getting adequate aid in his recovery. So he started recoveryafterstroke.com. He has a YouTube channel of the same name. He's an author and a podcast host on recovery after a stroke. And I think I saw you do some motivational speaking as well.

Bill Gasiamis 1:39

Yeah, I do from time to time I do some public speaking.

Gaymarie Mino 1:42

So my first question is, what were all your deficits after the strokes?

Bill's deficits after the strokes

Bill Gasiamis 1:56

The first time that I knew there was something wrong, was numbness on the left side, my entire left side was numb by the time I got to the hospital. The second time after the second bleed, which was six weeks after the first bleed, there were memory problems, the inability to make a sentence to finish a sentence, and I would lose track of where I was in a particular conversation.

Bill Gasiamis 2:26

I couldn't remember my wife at one moment when I was in hospital. And I couldn't work, I couldn't do any of those types of things, couldn't drive, I always felt like I was a bit spaced out in kind of this different dimension, really strange sensation where I was not in or out of my body.

Bill Gasiamis 2:52

And all those things kind of went away, they dissipated after time. But then after brain surgery, I was left with permanent left-side deficits, weakness, numbness, altered sensation on my skin, colder on my left side, and my balances a little bit out. And if I get fatigued, my left side gets fatigued way quicker than my right side.

Bill Gasiamis 3:20

And the best way to describe it is if you know what it's like to be drunk after a few drinks on my left side. My left side is like that. It's kind of like always two or three drinks in and my right side hasn't even started.

Gaymarie Mino 3:39

Luckily for you, though, you don't sound drunk and look drunk at the same time, like I do. So you lost the ability to walk? How is it? Did your body remember how to walk again?

Bill Gasiamis 4:00

So what it was, I have proprioception issues. So the way that it was explained to me is that my body doesn't know where it exists in the world. So it doesn't know where in the world it is. And it doesn't get feedback from my environment correctly, on my left side to tell the brain what to do.

Bill Gasiamis 4:21

So because of the numbness, I can't feel my foot on the ground correctly. So it's not given the right feedback correctly. Compared to the right side, and what happens is, that my muscles overcompensate. They try to make certain that I stay upright, and they tense up.

Bill Gasiamis 4:40

And then all of a sudden, every once in a while, they might just let go because they kind of forget to hold me up, you know. So what was happening was I couldn't walk because my leg didn't know that it was on the ground and my brain wasn't getting the feedback that it was on the ground.

Bill Gasiamis 5:02

So if I put pressure on me, on my left leg, my knee would buckle and collapse, and then I would fall over. And with my left hand, it was a similar issue, but more on the coordination side. And with the coordination, I couldn't bring my left arm, to my nose, for example, or to my mouth or my head.

Bill Gasiamis 5:25

And I couldn't pick things up and what was happening was, it had altered sensation. So when something is hot, it takes a little longer for it to register that it's hot. And I need to be careful with that. Also, because of the muscle kind of tenseness or spasticity, it's very difficult to hold something like a cup of coffee on my left-hand side, the hand can't stabilize itself.

Gaymarie Mino 5:55

So did you have tremors or just a stability issue?

Bill Gasiamis 6:02

I don't have anything that you can see. It's a stability issue. It's kind of the way the muscle works, rather than the ability of the arm to do things. So that arm can do things, but it's not supported by the muscles in the correct way.

Gaymarie Mino 6:22

Your brain is saying do this, and it's not registering?

Bill Gasiamis 6:27

Yeah, the arm is doing it. But it's not doing it the way it used to. It's not doing the way the right side used to do it. The same with the leg. So now, for example,

because of the feedback that I get on my leg, and the numbness that I have running is not possible.

Bill Gasiamis 6:41

In a long, kind of sustained way on a football field, for example, because of the levels of the ground and the uncertainty of the pitch. But I might not have enough information as to how to bend the knee and then I could end up falling over or buckle the knee or do something strange because it's not registering correctly the information that it needs to tell my brain as to how to adjust.

Gaymarie Mino 7:12

Is it a depth perception thing as well?

Bill Gasiamis 7:18

No, it's just a feedback loop. It's like, somebody put a filter on the feedback and the feedback is coming through. But it's not saying this is a hard surface, it's just saying this is a surface.

Gaymarie Mino 7:37

You don't know how to adapt to that.

Bill Gasiamis 7:39

Yeah and when you go to a soft surface like grass. It's just saying this is a surface. So it's not allowing me to respond to the difference in the surface as they've changed from concrete to grass.

Navigating depth perception issues

Gaymarie Mino 7:57

Well, I still can't run. Not that I ran a lot before, but I can at least run to the bathroom. But I also have problems with depth perception. So stepping off a curb, I have no idea if it's four inches or six inches. If it's a ramp, I have no idea. But incline, you know what I mean? So that's why people don't think about that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 8:26

Is the depth perception related to the eyes?

Gaymarie Mino 8:31

Yes, partly, and partly my balance. So I have vertigo all the time. I look drunk

when I walk. But though it's like when I'm walking, when I first have the strokes, I had a problem with surfaces, like my driveway changing into asphalt and asphalt changing into dirt and dirt into concrete.

Gaymarie Mino 8:59

I could not register it in my mind what to do. So I would just freeze and stand like a dummy because I did not know what to do even till I had no idea what that was like, if it was slick I needed to be careful.

Stroke recovery and the gut-brain

Gaymarie Mino 9:19

I mean, it was just I still have challenges with that. But I'm getting better because you have to do it. To get used to it. It's like riding a bike. You have to keep getting back on and back on and back on. But yeah, it's a lot. So I also saw on your podcast, YouTube is where I watched you that you feel that your gut was impacted by the stroke, right? How do you believe your gut is related to the stroke?

Bill Gasiamis 9:52

Well, there's a bit of research being done and don't quote me on which research it is or what it's called, but I read this several times through the last sort of 10 or 12 years, there's a bit of research being done is like, with strokes, are they beginning in the head? Or are they beginning somewhere else?

Bill Gasiamis 10:13

So it's possible, the research sort of suggests that the stroke in the head may be a symptom. It's not like where the stroke occurred. And it's also the cause and the symptom, and everything that's not happening there, there's a possibility that maybe some strokes, it could be a symptom, and the actual issue that you need to resolve is elsewhere.

Bill Gasiamis 10:42

And usually, what they're saying is where it needs to be resolved is the gut. Now, there is a massive amount of work being done on the gut as the second brain, so they talk about the gut as the second brain. And what they've discovered is that the gut has neurons in it, like the brain has neurons.

Bill Gasiamis 11:03

It has about the same amount of neurons as a cat's brain, which suggests intelligence. And they know for a fact that the gut and the head are in communication with each other through the vagus nerve. So there is a conversation happening up and down from the head to the gut, and from the gut to the head, constantly in this loop, where they communicate with each other.

Bill Gasiamis 11:34

And that's how we go into this process of knowing when to eat. Because we do get a gut feeling, the gut is saying, Oh, I'm hungry, but the head is what knows, knows what to do about it. It's the head that makes us decide as to when to start cooking, what we're going to cook, or what we're going to do.

Bill Gasiamis 11:58

So there's a whole thing that happens. And what I found, which was common with other stroke survivors, was that as soon as I had my head issue, my gut went offline. So it became less able to, to pass to go to the toilet. And it became sluggish.

Bill Gasiamis 12:19

And it became kind of unsettled. And it felt a bit weird. I thought it was just a coincidence, and I thought it was just me, but when I asked the question of people who follow my Instagram or my podcast, several people related to that experience and said a similar thing.

Bill Gasiamis 12:39

So with the gut is intelligence because there is a book by Michael Gerber Gershon called The Second Brain and then there are tons of other books that relate to that. The gut is where neurotransmitters are made. It's where serotonin is made. It's used by the brain, but it's created in the gut.

Bill Gasiamis 12:39

And then, if you have a gut that's not working optimally, and your brain is requiring serotonin, it's very difficult for the brain to access that serotonin if the gut is not working properly, and it's not able to make the neurotransmitters that the brain needs.

Bill Gasiamis 13:34

So the lack of neurotransmitters in conditions that are lacking serotonin, in

neurological conditions that are lacking serotonin, you have to resolve the issue in the gut so that there is more availability of serotonin so that the brain can use it and do what it needs to do with it.

Bill Gasiamis 13:57

Now, that's just one of the things that is created in the gut that the brain benefits from. Also, you want to make sure that when you're eating food, the food is not only supporting your gut but is easy to digest, so that you require less energy to digest, and therefore you have more energy for brain power.

Bill Gasiamis 14:22

You also need good quality food, for example, so that the gut is healed, so that it's doing all the things that it needs to do easily and effortlessly and creating all the neurotransmitters so that your brain can uptake it. But also so that you can have more energy from the perspective of having a meal before and you've said to your family or whoever after like Thanksgiving or Christmas or another celebration.

Bill Gasiamis 14:52

And you go oh man, I think I'm gonna go have a sleep because I'm in a food coma. Okay, so that food coma is a thing that is caused by eating too much food or the wrong food. And when you have a neurological condition, and you're already susceptible to fatigue, because your brain is doing more work to just stay up to date, then food comas and all that kind of stuff are more dramatic.

Bill Gasiamis 15:20

And I found that they were dramatic for me. And I was crashing heavily compared to any other time in my life.

Gaymarie Mino 15:28

Was this before the stroke or after?

Bill Gasiamis 15:30

After. So I'd have a normal food coma if I ever ate the wrong foods at a party or whatever. But then, but then doing having the same nutritional habits after the stroke just used to put me out of action for hours even a day. And I realized that I could improve the way that my brain worked by changing the food that I was eating, and not eating, for example.

Bill Gasiamis 15:56

Not drinking sodas, and not eating high-carb foods like pasta and bread. And because being from a Greek background, all our food comes on bread, you know, you have to put everything on bread. Sometimes you eat pasta, and you have a red sauce, a beautiful red sauce, and you put the pasta with the red sauce on bread.

Gaymarie Mino 16:21

It's not that different from America.

Bill Gasiamis 16:28

So those things used to be okay, but they're not okay for me now I can't cope. And there's a really big conversation as to why pasta, carbohydrates, potatoes, and white rice, should be avoided after somebody has a stroke.

Gaymarie Mino 16:48

Now, how did you find out the correlation though? That's not something that came first to my mind did somebody suggest it?

Bill Gasiamis 16:57

So for me, it was just I felt really bad for a long time after the first couple of bleeds. I didn't know, Can I do anything to make myself feel better, and nobody was able to tell me what to do. Especially back in 2012, there was no inflammation. And I was on this medication called dexamethasone, which was to reduce inflammation in the brain to steroids.

Bill Gasiamis 17:04

And it's given to neurological patients a lot. And this dexamethasone was a terrible steroid, it saved my brain. But it created these ridiculous side effects. I couldn't sleep, I was hallucinating at one stage, and I felt like ants were crawling over my skin.

Gaymarie Mino 17:46

Oh, that's horrible. Oh my god.

Bill Gasiamis 17:52

It was making me hungry. So it was dropping my blood sugar, and then I had to keep eating. I was eating about 4000 calories a day, which was double my intake because I wasn't sleeping, I was eating a three or four o'clock in the morning like massive bowls of pasta. This is happening for two or three weeks.

Bill Gasiamis 18:12

And in that two or three weeks, I put on eight kilos, which is about, I don't know, 16 pounds or 18 pounds or something like that something ridiculous. And then I thought I better read the side effects of this medication and I read them and they were just out of this world, there were about 60 of them and I was experiencing 20 of them.

Bill Gasiamis 18:46

And I just remembered somewhere where I heard the reason for this medication is to decrease the inflammation in your brain. And I thought okay, how can I decrease inflammation in my brain without this medication? Because, if I stay on this for too long, it's gonna be really bad.

Gaymarie Mino 19:05

Was this before the brain surgery or after?

Bill Gasiamis 19:05

Yeah, before this is the first six weeks.

Gaymarie Mino 19:13

Before your first one, right? Your very first stroke?

Decreasing brain inflammation

Bill Gasiamis 19:17

After the first one and before the second one. So I'm googling and I found something came up about decreasing inflammation in the brain. And it was a book by Dr. David Perlmutter. And the book was called Grain Brain. I just bought it I had no idea what it was going to teach me but the book Grain Brain was basically what then opened the can of worms and the rabbit holes that I went down that were related to recovering your brain after a neurological issue.

Bill Gasiamis 19:55

Now David Perlmutter is a neurologist and he dealt with a lot Have people who have experienced dementia, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, those types of types of conditions. While all his patients were coming to him with issues, neurological related, he wasn't able to support them in any way medication was always going to just keep people alive longer and decreased as long as possible, and he didn't

like it as an outcome.

Bill Gasiamis 20:29

So they did a lot of research. And they found the Atkins diet supported people back in the '60s and I think in the '70s. And the Atkins diet was one of the first keto diets, but missed both Dr. Atkins, who wrote the book couldn't do is he couldn't prove the way that we can prove now, the long-term beneficial effects of a keto diet. He had what we'll call anecdotal evidence.

Bill Gasiamis 21:00

Evidence suggested that this is helping people because he would have a sick person who would put them on the Atkins diet or the keto diet that would get better, that would report all these amazing things that would lose weight, the brain would come alive, they didn't know why, exactly, they didn't know the mechanism that was working. So his research was poo-pooed a lot by the other side of medicine.

Bill Gasiamis 21:29

And as a result of that, it didn't take hold. And it was just considered a fad diet to lose weight in the 80s. And the 90s is kind of how I heard of it. But then, the more research these guys did, Dr. David Perlmutter and his team, discovered that they were getting long-term benefits for his Alzheimer patients, his dementia patients, and they were able to, with met medication, improve the outcomes of a lot of these people, and give them a better long term diagnosis, I suppose.

Bill Gasiamis 22:06

And that was it for me, it was like, okay, I'm gonna do exactly what his book says. So his book said, basically stop eating bread, white potatoes, pasta, and sugar. And I just did exactly what he said. And then I started to notice the benefits to my health, I lost weight, my brain switched on. Now, when I say switched on, it just didn't feel as fatigued as it did previously, even though I had a blood clot in my head, I had neurological symptoms, and I still hadn't had the surgery.

Bill Gasiamis 22:43

So, you know, we didn't know exactly what was going to happen in the future. I thought if I could support my brain and reduce inflammation in my brain, which is how Dr. Perlmutter Express, describes that as well. Well, then that could be a good thing going forward without medication, right? And that was the entire

reason that this whole thing started.

Bill Gasiamis 23:08

And then what would happen, actually, every once in a while is I would have a sweet biscuit. And I'd feel the buzz in my head. Instantaneously, I could feel the sugar running through my veins into my, into my body. And then it was weird. And I thought, this is strange maybe it's nothing.

Bill Gasiamis 23:30

And then it would happen again, say a month later or two months later. And it would be like, Wow, oh my god, I'm feeling like I've just taken some drugs or something, you know, like that. And then, I was just like, Okay, I know, this stuff affects me in a certain way. And maybe it did before the brain injury.

Gaymarie Mino 23:49

You didn't notice it.

Bill Gasiamis 23:51

I didn't notice it. But now with a brain injury, I can't afford to be out of action because of brain fog for months, weeks days, or whatever. So I did the best I could. Yeah.

Gaymarie Mino 24:05

Now, is that just for brain bleeds or is it also for blood clot? Also

Bill Gasiamis 24:10

for people who have had an injury, from concussion from blood clots, strokes, bleeds, or any type of neurological injury?

Gaymarie Mino 24:23

That's amazing. Honestly. What do you say you are spacey and foggy and all that wasn't like a cognitive thing. Or was it just like, could you think in your head but not say?

Bill Gasiamis 24:38

Yeah,

Gaymarie Mino 24:40

what I'm trying to say. For example, I knew this was a can. Okay. In my head. It was an I knew it was the Mountain Dew can but when I spoke, it came up chicken.

And I know that's crazy, but people are like what are you talking about? I'm like, you know, chicken Do I need a chicken? I want a chicken. So they bring me a piece of chicken over like, what are you guys? Why did you bring it? But I had no idea that I was saying that. Does that make sense?

Bill Gasiamis 25:14

Yeah, no, that wasn't me. So it was just spacey like, like I would get distracted and couldn't complete a sentence or I had an idea to start a conversation, I would start the conversation for session, and then the idea would go away. Or my wife would ask me a question. And I'd begin to answer the question, and then I'd forget what the question was. So it was in mid-sentence, I

Gaymarie Mino 25:46

did the same thing. Yeah, like what? I was more like, um, so you're talking to me? And I go, Oh, yeah. Oh, squirrel. He's not what I mean, I'll be like, had no attention whatsoever. It was like, easily distracted. And I can be asked to be so frustrating for like your wife, your kids, people that talk to us? Because we don't know we're doing it. But then they're like, well, they just don't care. They're not paying attention. It's like, No, I swear, I want to I am interested in just, I can't do

Bill Gasiamis 26:27

it. Yeah, there's a bit of that. There was a bit of that. But it's, it kind of got better. As years after the stroke, things took time. You know, things kind of improved. And sometimes, if I'm having a bad day, if I've had a tiring day up, I haven't slept well, the night before. Yeah, then I do get a little bit flaky still.

Gaymarie Mino 26:53

I feel bad for your wife. And I don't mean to disparage you. But I mean, I just think we don't give enough credit to the caregivers because they have no idea what's going on. None. Is it real? Are they faking it? are they picking the Vantage? Are they worse off than I think they are? I mean, it has to be very troubling for them to get it. Yeah,

Bill Gasiamis 27:19

I think those are some of our hardest times trying to work out. Is this normal? Is this a stroke symptom? Is that normal? Is that you know, what's going on? And we had a lot of questions that weren't answered. So there was a lot of googling. There were a lot of meetings with doctors. There were a lot of visits to the

hospital that were unexpected.

Bill Gasiamis 27:43

Because I would I would feel strange, neurological symptoms, and my wife has got no idea. She's not a doctor. She's not a knight. She's a regular person. And then she doesn't have a rulebook nobody gave her. These are the 20 things you need to know about stray. She just went home. And so she was told, here, take your husband and seek him out.

Bill Gasiamis 28:07

She didn't know anything. Right. So we, we did a lot of stuff at let's go to the hospital again. What's this? Okay, how can we help you while you're here for well, my husband's had, you know, some brain bleeds. He's feeling a bit weird. All the blah, please do a scan. Just make sure it's not bleeding because he hasn't had a result. Right? etc. So, okay, well, all right.

Bill Gasiamis 28:38

Well, no worries. 3, 4, 5, 6 weeks later, we'd be back that Ah, you're in six weeks ago. I was. Yep. Do you think you're having another bleed? I don't know. Probably not. But why risk I've already had to? Okay, I know. We're all right, we'll give you another scan, another scan, you know. So, the only way that we could feel comfortable and at ease was to get things done continuously. And be proactive instead of dying wondering.

Is this normal?

Gaymarie Mino 29:13

Right? Well, the thing is, I don't know if you felt this way. But when I went, I didn't have a neurologist, they didn't know I had two strokes. And they didn't assign me a neurologist. So I finally went and got one after three years. But before then I had no idea. Is this normal? Am I supposed to feel this way? Nothing. And they make me feel crazy. Oh, you know, ya know, you're having a stroke quit being a drama queen.

Gaymarie Mino 29:48

Just go home, that's what got me into researching and the YouTube channel and all that because there are so many things that aren't told to us, you know we need to know if this is normal. One of the great things I like about having my YouTube

channel as well, as you to all these stroke survivors is, that every stroke is different. But we all have some commonality. Somebody has emotional problems, and somebody has, you know, and we can all relate. And that made me feel less crazy than I already am. But I agree. So is that what happened to you did you finally just reach out to other stroke survivors?

Bill Gasiamis 30:38

I did that locally in my community. And at the Stroke Foundation here in Australia, I met a lot of stroke survivors, because I volunteered there for a little while. And it was a relief to hear their stories. They're going through something similar or, yeah, that this, this is what it meant for me or, and it was like, Okay, I get this now, like, I'm all good, I understand that little thing.

Bill Gasiamis 31:05

But then there are a million other things I need to understand. And so part of my curiosity, when I get curious about something, I never stop trying to learn about it. And of course, I had a very big motivation as to why I needed to learn about this stuff. I needed to get my head around it And I also needed, to constantly talk about it. So my wife doesn't need to hear about it from me every single day.

Bill Gasiamis 31:35

So to avoid doing that to her, a friend of mine, for a joke said to me, so what do you want to do with this thing that you're learning about stroke and healing the brain and all that? What are you going to do about that with that information? So I'd like to share it with people and tell them about it. He goes, Okay, where do you want to do that? So I'd like to do that.

Bill Gasiamis 31:59

You know, in my neighborhood in Preston and his own how many stroke survivors do you think you'll find there? I said I don't know. 514, or no, no idea. All right. Because do you know there's this thing called the internet? Yeah, like? Yeah, it goes in all around the world, you know? We go Yeah, he goes, What did you just do something like that? If I try and share it, online, Facebook, Instagram, all that kind of stuff. And then to me, that was like, okay, so I wonder if I could find stroke survivors on Instagram?

Bill Gasiamis 32:38

And of course, I did. And then I reached out to them, and I said, Hey, do you want

to have a chat? Because I'd love to know about your story so I can understand and learn from it. They said yes. And then since we were chatting, I said, Can we record it? And then they said, Yes. And I said, I'm gonna put it on the podcast, or YouTube, and that, and that's how it started.

Bill Gasiamis 33:01

And that was my therapy. That was me talking about it more often than I was able to. And that was me connecting with another stroke survivor, and that was feeling better. And that was them feeling better. And then we put it out there. And people started telling me that they loved the interview. And that's it. I was hooked after that.

Gaymarie Mino 33:22

It is it's like a drug. Because I think for me, just feeling not alone. Because, you know, some of my family members left, most of my friends left. I was all by myself and then dealing with these stroke symptoms. And I couldn't talk I couldn't walk. I mean, I was having all these things. And so for a while, I struggled because I was like, well, nobody can understand me. Nobody can, you know, watch me walk up as embarrassed.

Gaymarie Mino 33:58

And I think you had a young man on your channel. He had aphasia bad. He was like, 17 or something. Do you remember him? Jack? So that was me. That's how I couldn't talk. And so I thought, you know, if somebody saw me then and somebody sees me now, that gives people hope, because I have a lot of doctors tell me well, you are what your six months so welcome to your life.

There's always hope in stroke recovery

Gaymarie Mino 34:31

Adjust to your new life. And I'm like, excuse my French. But FU I'm not gonna I'm not gonna take this. I'm going to show you all wrong. And watch me and so I started recording it for me. And for other people, not to pat myself on the back but so many to inspire somebody else could give hope. Because there is hope for everybody.

Bill Gasiamis 34:55

Pat yourself on the back. Yeah, who cares? Let's do it. Nobody else is doing it. We

know what I mean. Yeah, but

Gaymarie Mino 35:04

I mean, I still have a long way to go. But I'm much better than what they thought.

Bill Gasiamis 35:09

Yeah, you celebrate the wins though. That's the thing. There's a lot of shit that we have to put up with. So whatever the winds are, we may as I'll celebrate those, and the thing about what I loved about Jack was, that he was all the way I told you back when December 28, 2020, when I interviewed Jack, and episode 127. Right. So, I'm at episode nearly 300 now. So Jack contacted me, he is not embarrassed, he's not worried, he's not afraid, isn't whatever.

Bill Gasiamis 35:49

He wanted to be on the podcast. He was so unwell. But he still wanted to be on the podcast, he can't hardly talk. And, you know, originally, when I was doing the podcast, I thought, I will reach out to people, and people with Aphasia would say, No, I don't want to be on the podcast. And it's like, Oh, okay. I didn't know exactly what aphasia was like. So I had an idea that they should be on the podcast, like, why wouldn't they?

Bill Gasiamis 36:24

I found that strange. When I met more people with aphasia. I understood what the difficulty was. If they thought that what I was looking for was somebody perfect to talk to. And I'm not into that I don't have a perfect podcast show where it's produced. I have conversations with people. I don't care whether they can talk. I don't care how long it takes.

Bill Gasiamis 36:50

But I want to show stroke in all of its versions, not just my version because my version is not like everyone else's version. So Jack reached out to me. He came on, after three years after he had a stroke. And then his mum contacted me a little while later and said, thank you so much for having him on the podcast. It meant a lot to him. And it boosted his confidence. It may have taken his ability to step out in public and to speak with aphasia, maybe took it to the next level.

Bill Gasiamis 37:30

And I thought, well, there you go. That's exactly what the podcast is about. And then since then, I've had lots of people with aphasia join me on the podcast. And

there are different stages. And one gentleman, Duncan Campling. He doesn't specifically have aphasia, but because he was because he had a brainstem stroke. And he was locked in. He had a tracheostomy for a very long time. And his voice is very shallow, it's not very strong. And he may also have I think it's dysphasia muscle issues in his throat. And he spoke with a computer.

Gaymarie Mino 38:17

Like Stephen Hawking.

Bill Gasiamis 38:18

Yeah, kind of like that. Like we planned it. I sent him the questions. And he answered the questions. And then when I asked him the question on the podcast, he pressed play, and he'd answer my question.

Gaymarie Mino 38:31

That is amazing.

Bill Gasiamis 38:34

How cool is that? I think he had an iPad program or something like that. And so how cool is that? So he can have the conversation. He can attend the podcast, he can be part of the community. It's slower, it takes longer, but it's still as effective. And yeah, how good is that? That you can give a voice to somebody like that Jack, and Duncan, they wouldn't have had a voice if it wasn't for technology, you know, this thing that we are doing.

Gaymarie Mino 39:14

I was so proud. And like, I was proud of him, which is kind of like I don't even know him. But I was so proud that he was so brave. And I can understand them. Because I remember talking like that. There were certain times I couldn't understand him. But I mean, he was so good. And what he proved was he still here? He is still up here. And he knew what he was trying to convey it was just this stupid thing that he couldn't convey.

Gaymarie Mino 39:48

And I was so proud and you to the patients. I mean, that's why a lot of people what I have aphasia worse, people would try to interrupt me and finish my sense Just because they got tired of waiting, well, that doesn't help me. I need to work it out I need because my tongue half of was paralyzed half of my esophagus were paralyzed. You can still see my face right here flying. And I mean, it took me I had

to practice. And what better way for you to shut the hell up and let me talk? But I got a dog.

Bill Gasiamis 40:27

Yeah, the thing about people like me, people like I was before the stroke is, that you've got no idea how to behave around the stroke survivors, you behave like an idiot because you don't know what to do or say. And it's normal. But it's so challenging to be a stroke survivor and have somebody while you're just about to forget your sentence, like hurry up, get it out.

Gaymarie Mino 41:02

Exactly. Oh, you're trying to say this? No, no, I wasn't. But thank you. Now I forgot what I was going to say. And that happened to me so many times. It was so frustrating. And the other thing too. So what do you want to tell people what not to say to a stroke survivor? Or not to act like that? Ever thought about that?

Bill Gasiamis 41:26

I have it, you know, to be good. If you somebody who's listening to this, and you're somebody who hasn't had a stroke, thankfully, and you know, somebody who has had a stroke, and you don't know what to do or say don't do or say anything. Just be there. To say hello, I love you. You're my friend. What can I do for you? Just shut the fuck up.

How to deal with stroke survivors

Gaymarie Mino 41:53

I did a whole session on that on my channel. Because not to berate people. But it was like, I'm not deaf. So you don't have to raise your voice to me because I can hear you fine. Just because I can't talk doesn't mean I can't hear. And the other thing, the most condescending thing you could have done to me I had nurses do this to me all the time was talk to me like I'm a baby. Oh, do you want it? Okay, well, let me get that for you, dear. Oh, you're such a good girl for doing that. Good job. I mean, I was 46 I'm not a kid. Are you kidding me?

Bill Gasiamis 42:39

They don't know because they know that they've never been in this situation. So you gotta give him a little bit of slack. But at the same time, it's okay for us to say you're being an idiot. And I remember one of the best interviews that I had was

with a lady Clodah Dunlop. And Clodah had locked-in syndrome as well. She had not been able to speak for many months because she also had trouble with her throat tracheostomy and all that kind of stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 43:18

Clodah I interviewed back in episode 38. And she's coming out of the stroke situation and couldn't move a single part of her body, not her arms, not her legs, nothing, just her eyes. And immediately with her partner. I think it was her partner or husband. They set up a system a system to communicate. One, blink was Yes, two No. And three was You're a moron. So they set the system up between themselves. The doctor would come in, the doctor would come in and say something stupid. And Clodah would blink three times.

Gaymarie Mino 44:16

Oh my gosh, that's funny.

Bill Gasiamis 44:18

And between the two of them. The doctor didn't know. But between the two of them, they knew that Clodah had just called the doctor a moron. So even in her hardest times, she also felt the difficulty of the inability of the doctors and the nurses to comprehend her state that she was completely all there. No issues. She felt cold, heat, itchy, all that kind of stuff, but she just couldn't tell anyone. I'm feeling itchy on my foot. Or I'm feeling cold. put a blanket on me or if I'm feeling hot, take the blanket off. And she just had to deal with it.

Gaymarie Mino 45:07

Is she better now?

Bill Gasiamis 45:09

She's better now, she was a police officer in Ireland, and she's gone back to work. She is a detective now.

Gaymarie Mino 45:17

She's gone back to work. That's amazing.

Bill Gasiamis 45:22

Yeah, she has to lift deficits on one side. She has spasticity. She has a foot drop. But you know, it took her a long time. But I interviewed her man I interviewed her in 2019. And her stroke was in 2015. So she went back to work. Maybe it took,

you know, seven or eight years or something like that. But she's back to work as a police officer.

Gaymarie Mino 45:48

Because my uncle Phil had a stroke I don't even know I was liberal. And he had locked-in syndrome. And my aunt, I love her job. Let me say that I love her to death. I loved her. But she had them in the living room. And so there's like 20, left kids are all cousins running around, you know, the envelope balls and he would just sit there and he would communicate the same way he would blink once for yes and twice or no. But he would cry. And that would kill me.

Gaymarie Mino 46:26

Because I knew he was in there. But he couldn't interact at all. And he could see everybody running around having a good time. And he lasted seven years like that before he finally pulled the plug on him. Because that has to be your hell. on personal hell yeah.

Gaymarie Mino 46:48

So when I had my stroke, that was my biggest fear. Because I remembered him. And I was like, Oh, my God and I could hear myself talk. But it was in my head not out. And so I was like, Oh, I got Uncle Phil, I'm like Uncle Phil, this horrible, I'm gonna die. I mean, there were so many things. So I admire that, she's better because that's amazing.

Bill Gasiamis 47:15

And now, you know, a lot of luck goes her way. She's gonna go through a heap of terrible things. And she's gonna struggle for a long, long time. But a lot of things go her way. And one of the things that goes her way is that her recovery continues and continues and continues. And she pushes us up, and she goes after it. And she's got the right mindset.

Bill Gasiamis 47:37

And she's got, say, the right partner, or whomever. And then from all the challenges that she's faced, she's focusing on the results. And she writes a book about it, and she does all this stuff. Not everyone can do that. So I think it's our responsibility. If we have the smallest glimmer of hope, you know, for 1% recovery, it's the bloody go after it and I think we have to do for people like your Uncle Phil because that's what they would want to have the opportunity. And if

they can't get it, well, then that's luck is their luck. And then they have to just deal with it. You know, what can you do? You can't do anything about it.

Gaymarie Mino 48:28

Times were different back then. I mean, there have been so many advances and so much information now. Back then it was like probably a death sentence. Yeah, that's all you can do. He's always gonna be this way. Like the doctors. I mean, not one doctor I was over here. I was in a wheelchair, I was paralyzed on my right side. And they said, well, are going to be at six months is how you're going to be for the rest of your life. And I would have listened to that, like a lot of people do, then I would have never tried.

Gaymarie Mino 49:06

I mean, I broke so many plates. But I have it in my hand. No, I'm gonna be able to do this one day and if other people are encouraged by that try it I mean, I think it's just the same as the the negative connotations that doctors and not all doctors. Because if you watch my channel, I have a whole bunch of inspirational speech therapists then and other people on my channel. But you have to search them out. You can't expect them to come to you.

Bill Gasiamis 49:42

Just the moron doctors.

Gaymarie Mino 49:47

Yeah, that's not the name I'd call them but yeah.

Encouraging stroke recovery

Bill Gasiamis 49:50

But we wouldn't be here without them. And they all deserve a little bit of respect and our good graces. And that's fair enough. But there's a lot of work to do. They've got a lot of work to do. I can't believe that I still hear that story in 2024, where somebody was in the hospital and the doctor said, I will never walk again. Like, how do you know, you've got no idea.

Bill Gasiamis 49:53

You can't say that to somebody, and then walk away and go about the rest of your day, like you did something good. There's nothing good about telling somebody,

they're never going to do something again, you should avoid being so definite in your comment, you should encourage them to go after recovery, even though it looks like they may never walk again. You should encourage them.

Gaymarie Mino 50:19

This was my mindset, if I got 5% better than what I was, I'm getting good. Yeah, you know, and I have realistic goals. And they changed throughout the years as I got better and saw my results. But I mean, there was no way I was gonna settle. Because I'm, I want everybody to know you're worth it. You're worth it to try, you're worth it to give it a go. And it doesn't mean like two weeks on nothing change. I'm over it.

Gaymarie Mino 51:18

No! I'm seven years out and I'm still doing my exercise. I'm still, you know, trying to talk well, which I'm doing pretty well. I think he can understand me better now. I mean, this is a possibility. And just because you don't have any deficit on the outside, I want people to know, you still have things going on inside your head. I mean, you know, a lot of people see me and have only recognized my physical deficit.

Gaymarie Mino 51:51

They don't know my emotional my emotional center was messed up for like, probably six months after my stroke. And I was angry, and I cried, and I laughed at absolutely everything. I mean, people thought I was nuts. And I think but look at me now. I have my anger under control. I have my laughing under control. I laugh at the right things I'm supposed to laugh at. The only thing I can control now spying, but that's okay, I guess.

Bill Gasiamis 52:23

That happens to me too. Every once in a while right at the wrong, and there's no such thing as a right or wrong time. Like just a cry. That's it. Bad luck. You don't like it? Get the hell out of the room. I don't care. I'm not upset. I'm not happy. I'm not mad. I'm just crying. And you have to deal with that. I don't have to deal with that. If you're uncomfortable because a grown man is crying.

Gaymarie Mino 52:46

It has to be harder for men, because of the stigma that real men don't cry. Well, that's a bunch of hooey. But also, I don't want you crying at AT&T commercials

either. You know what I mean? But I mean, real men cry. And it's okay.

Bill Gasiamis 53:04

I used to cry at commercials and TV and all that kind of stuff. It's like, my wife would go what are you crying about now? I don't know I'm just crying. And she would tease me about it. In a joking, loving way, you know, she would tease me about it. You know, Bill is going to cry again. Oh, my God, you're going to cry. And she would sometimes make it worse because I'm trying not to cry. And then I'd start crying. And I say you bitch like stop it, leave me alone.

Bill Gasiamis 53:37

We've kind of come to that point where we just accept that as it's no different now to a grumpy face. Or, you know, or a silly comment. It's just part of everything that happens in daily life. And you and the people that are around me who are uncomfortable kind of have seen it often enough now so that they're not uncomfortable that right they know it's not a disguise devastated cry. They know it's not a severe emotional, negative cry, right? They know it's just a thing that happens to him. And that's not a big deal.

Gaymarie Mino 54:29

I wish people would understand, though, that we're human. And I have pity party days. And I let myself have pity party days. Except I can camp there. So the next day, I better get off of math. And it's over and I'm done. But I have pity party days. Some days I don't know if you experience it but worse for me. I can't talk I can't walk my balances way off, I can grip anything you know, I tend to have tremors.

Mental therapy for stroke survivors

Gaymarie Mino 55:01

So if I tried to do something I haven't even (inaudible) with this hand in seven years, and I was right-handed, haven't written, I mean, those things sometimes bother me. But the next day I get off my ass and I go, Okay, well, back to holding my hand and trying to do it. So while we're on that, do you believe that stroke survivors to get mental therapy as well as all the other therapies out there?

Bill Gasiamis 55:29

Yeah, well, you can't recover from a stroke just by going to physical therapy,

that's not going to happen. Yeah, you need to combine your therapy with mental therapy and emotional therapy. They're very different things as mental therapy is how you think it's what you do with your thoughts. And the way you go about thinking about whether you're in a problem, or you're looking for a solution, whether you're focusing on the issues, or focusing on the results.

Bill Gasiamis 55:58

So it's like how do you mentally apply your brain to help you with your recovery, and then the emotional stuff is pretty clear. Everyone knows what that's about, right? emotional recovery is about how you feel about things. How you feel about your new body, how you feel about the future, how you feel about the past, how you feel about your relationships, how they impact you, positively, or negatively.

Bill Gasiamis 56:27

So you have to do a lot of emotional work. And people go to psychological counseling, and they might focus on just sometimes you go to a psychological counselor, and they focus on just all the stuff, that's terrible, you go there, you leave feeling worse, you know, and these are all my problems and all that kind of stuff, you have to come to stroke with a solution focus.

Bill Gasiamis 56:53

So I've got all these problems, this is the list, which one can I solve first, and then you, you pick the easiest one, and you solve that one first. So you get a win on the board. And then you pick the next one and the next one. And then slowly, as you go towards the top of that to the hardest ones, you've resolved a lot of those little issues that are bugging you that are niggling at you.

Bill Gasiamis 57:15

And they're no longer in the way and you have more energy to solve the bigger problems. And you can't find solutions to problems when you're just focusing on your physical recovery. You can't, I can't walk properly. So I'm going to put all my effort into walking, and not think about how not being able to walk is affecting you emotionally. And then how not being able to walk is affecting you mentally.

Bill Gasiamis 57:46

You have to be able to go, I'm going to do physical therapy, and I'm going to try and work out how that's bothering me emotionally and how I can apply my mental state to solving the I can't walk problem. And then only then do you have this

complete approach to recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 58:08

Because I've spoken to stroke survivors, who will tell me that 10 years down the track, they avoided the emotional recovery. And that their stroke, the difficulties, and the challenges that stroke causes. And at some point, I had an aha moment, and I realized, I think I've got to go back and deal with that stuff.

Gaymarie Mino 58:34

The only thing art because I tried to find I only tried twice. But the two that I did find they're more interested in my calf herd. And, you know, it's not about that. I'm fucked up. Now. You know what I mean? I'm like, You need to deal with me where I'm at. Now where I was, where I'm at.

Bill Gasiamis 58:58

I'm gonna say but. A lot of the things that when I coach stroke survivors to get through their stroke, they think that I'm working with them to overcome stroke. It's not true. I always help them overcome shit from the past that's getting in the way of their stroke recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 59:19

And it's the things that we haven't dealt with from the past that make us behave a certain way that get in the way of our recovery. And when the problem is, is that your particular counselor may have not realized that for that session. You needed to talk about today. And when you're in that session, and you want to talk about today, that's what you talk about.

Bill Gasiamis 59:48

At some point the conversation has to be steered to if you're feeling a certain way today, have you ever felt a certain way like that in the past? And if you have, what was behind that, what do you think that thing in the past made you feel that way? And then is that appropriate for you to be feeling that way in the future? Or in the present? Can we deal with that in the past so that we don't have to feel it in the future or the present?

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:21

And that's the thing, like, when the nurse tells you, I think you mean this. And you go, No, that's not what I meant. Let me finish. And you're in session with a therapist and your therapist goes, I think we need to talk about your past. And

you're going, No, we need to talk about right now because I want to vent, I'm angry, I need to get it off my chest. And then when I've done that when I've got it off my chest.

Gaymarie Mino 1:00:52

And then we can work out the other shit, right?

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:54

Yeah. So it is a combination of things that they need to talk about. But they need to be very skilled at allowing you to be for today's session, to be just one that you're not solving any problems. You're just lying down. I suppose. All the challenges, you're just saying, Here, they all are bloody This is how many there are.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:54

And that's it. That's all today is. And at least by allowing you to do that what you're doing with your head is you're going on maybe I've put all my problems in order. And now I know what they look like, for the first time grasp them. And I know what they are. And then it's like, okay, let's pick the next one. And let's break it down. But they're interrupting your flow in a session and trying to divert it.

Dealing with the past while in stroke recovery

Gaymarie Mino 1:01:19

They don't care. That's how I felt they didn't care because I wanted to talk about one day, I was 46, a single mom going to work. Everything was normal as it was. And then the next day, life over a whole different person, a different life, a different situation. The second thing I want to talk about is my son, he was 17 at the time and he left.

Gaymarie Mino 1:02:15

And I have not spoken to him since then. And so I wanted to talk about that. Explain to me why you think that is. Help me understand what he's going through. And I mean, over the years I have come to do that. But I mean, I need the help then. I was so depressed, I didn't want to do anything. And that's what I

needed to deal with at that time.

Gaymarie Mino 1:02:40

So I said, Well, forget it. I'm gonna try another one. Which is the same thing. Well, you have abandonment issues. No, my son left me so he is kind of abandoned. You know, I mean, it was just, I don't know, I just didn't feel like they cared what happened to me. They didn't want my money that's what I felt like.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:06

might have gone, you might have found the wrong one. And that's our responsibility to keep looking for the right one. That's, yeah, it is. And that's what I do. I don't take shit from any medical professional if I don't like what they've got to say to me if they're not if I don't feel like they're part of my team. They're off the team. They're out. And I'm looking for somebody else. You know, I left one hospital. And I found a new surgeon at a different hospital to do my brain surgery because the doctors were talking about me, they weren't involving me in the conversation. Right.

Gaymarie Mino 1:03:37

Not to you, at you, or about you. I found that too. That was frustrating.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:44

Yeah. So I think you're, you're it's good that you try and you try again. And that's why you're not going to You wouldn't want to talk about your son not being around and you're not going for a diagnosis. You don't want to know what the hell's wrong with you. You want to, you want to go there and you want to go?

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:02

Like, this is how this situation is making me feel. Now, if she or he helps you deal with how you feel about that. And let's say you can put those feelings to rest and they go away, then that might shift your mood and your mood, right? And you might be able to reach out to your son in a new way that you've never had before.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:26

And then he might say, she seems different. Maybe, I will chat with her because you're not going to him emotional anymore. What you're doing is you're going to him level-headed, clear of emotions. And you're just gonna go you know what, he's my son, I'm going to reach out to him that their job is to is to get you to that point where you've dealt with the negative feelings.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:52

And you've changed your mindset so that you can try again. And then if that fails, and then you have negative feelings in a negative mindset again, it's again to help you deal with the negative feelings, right? You can put them to rest, and help you shift your mindset. Look back at it in another way and go, Okay, let's, let's go forward again. Let's have another try and keep trying and keep trying.

Gaymarie Mino 1:05:17

I was very irrational. I was I was all over the place. I'm like, oh, everybody's leaving me. Look at me now I can do anything. I mean, I was in the lowest of my lows. And I was just hoping for somebody to be rational and say, Okay, I'm a very methodical person.

Gaymarie Mino 1:05:36

So okay, you feel this way today. So tomorrow, you're going to brush your hair. You know what I mean? And then think about why you don't brush your hair. Does that make sense? I mean, like, I needed somebody to like, give me a guy to function. Yeah. And be rational, where I was very irrational. Very irrational.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:01

Yeah. And look, maybe you weren't the right client for that particular counselor as well.

Gaymarie Mino 1:06:08

Well, I think my expectations might have been too high, too, because I was looking for somebody who understood about strokes. And I don't think there are many mental health professionals that I've encountered, who have dealt with that before.

Gaymarie Mino 1:06:28

Because I, you know, I'm a big fan of I have PTSD. Because my whole life changed. I mean, sounds freaked me out still. There are a lot of things that I wish people would try to zero in on and focus and I don't give a shit.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:48

Yeah. I think I think it's fair and reasonable. Especially when you've had a stroke, and there's been all these changes, and you're going through a tough time, to have some expectations of the people who are helping, that they might be able to help. I think it's fair and reasonable.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:09

But it's not uncommon, what you're saying that people get disappointed in the helpers and that they feel like their helpers are not helping. And then they feel like they're not equipped to deal with stroke and all the stuff that goes with it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:25

And in one way I understand them. And in another way, I understand the counselors and the helpers, because they've never had a stroke. So even though they know, yeah,

Gaymarie Mino 1:07:40

I probably thought the same way. Before I had my stroke. I was under the impression only older people have strokes. I had no idea about younger people having strokes with my first you know, but I know, it just makes me sad that I just want somebody out there to care.

Gaymarie Mino 1:08:04

Even if you don't have the answers. Lend me your ear. And let's go through this together. You know what I mean? I think that's why I like the community we're in. Because people do care. People do. Listen, you know,

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:19

it's what you said what we said earlier, it's like, if you don't know what to say, you don't need to say anything. Like, just,

Gaymarie Mino 1:08:25

exactly. Just be there. I don't know what well, they thought therapy was supposed to be like, but it was not that. Because it was like, they wanted us to ascribe me to anti-depression medication. I'm like, there's a difference between being sad and depressed. And I was sad.

Gaymarie Mino 1:08:48

I mean, most of my family left, I was all my friends. My whole suit. I mean, I just showed you a picture of me. I look so different. And everything changed. And I couldn't see I couldn't talk. I mean, I just want somebody to listen, I guess. And then yeah,

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:12

and then to depressant medication. In that particular situation, might be like a,

like a sort of like a way to decrease the people's emotional response, and to try and come up a little bit. And then

Gaymarie Mino 1:09:27

No, I had anxiety medication, which helped. Yeah, but it was different than this stuff. This stuff made me like not care about anything. I was a zombie. Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:39

And that's kind of part of it is to interrupt the pattern that antidepressant medication is interrupted that pattern that people are in. So that's kind of why they prescribe it a lot.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:49

The other part of anti-depression medication for somebody that is in your state, for example, after a stroke, and goes through all those changes all at the same time is it kind of gets in the way of helping you work out what your problems are, and then solving them promptly.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:07

And sometimes what I think antidepressant medication might do for somebody like you is delay the solution to the problem. And, like put it down the road, because we're dulling all the emotions with darling, all of them, then, the feelings, and then they just come back later. So, yeah, you're still gonna have to deal with them.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:30

It's just when, and some people will not want to deal with it right now there's too much on their plate, some people might be more solutions-focused on wanting to deal with it now, even though they're in a really bad way.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:41

So it's finding the right balance for you. And I feel like what you at least did was perhaps stumbled a couple of times, but they found the right version of the recovery that was going to suit you. And you went for that, even though they were trying to guide you to meds or diagnose you with a condition or whatever.

Overcoming stroke recovery challenges and personal growth

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:06

So like, yeah, like, my whole life is different, completely different. Of course, I'm going to have shit going wrong. And probably, well, that stuff. So it's what you said, you know, I needed a guiding hand. And somebody to lead me down the path. Because

Gaymarie Mino 1:11:23

it was very overwhelming, very overwhelming. I'm sure. I mean, I couldn't go to work anymore. My lifestyle is completely different than what it used to be completely different. I couldn't drive I couldn't, you know, type. I couldn't text I couldn't talk.

Gaymarie Mino 1:11:41

I mean, my whole life was changed. And so I was that I wasn't impressed, because I still got up every morning, I still tried everything I didn't, you know, I know.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:57

Yeah, they're very valid points, everything you say is pretty valid. I think it's all stuff that I've considered at one time or another. And then, as you get further out, you know, at seven years, I probably would have responded differently to what I'm responding now at 12 years.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:12

Yeah, you know, so you have a very different, you develop you, your thoughts over the next few years. And you'll look back on it differently. But, but I think you're doing great because you're still demonstrating how terrible things were.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:33

And now, how things have changed and shifted for the better. Regardless, you're being proactive, you know, you've got your channel, and you're trying to put content out there, and you're trying to meet people, you're doing all the things that I started doing way back when. And what that does is that pays off that pays dividends.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:54

And you get results at some stage, whether they are changes in the way that you feel about yourself, or you met an amazing person. So you've opened your circle of people further, or, you know, for me, it's writing a book, it's going on other people's podcasts. I've interviewed, I'm going to interview a gentleman who's going to interview me a guy called Nurse Keith.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:19

And I had no idea about the particular podcast that he does. And who is involved with in what communities are involved? So he interviews, nurses, it's more about providing information to nurses about everything. So now I'm going to be the first stroke survivor who goes on his podcasts and talks to nurses, right? So isn't that great that I'm gonna get to do what we're saying?

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:46

It took 12 years, but I'm going to do it, I'm going to talk to them. So they have a different understanding of what it's like to deal with a stroke survivor. And then hopefully,

Gaymarie Mino 1:13:58

that'll lead to other people, other health care providers wanting to know. Yeah, knowledge about us. Yeah,

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:07

correct. Right. And then Keith is part of a network of podcasts, that some guy in the UK in the United Kingdom operates called the Health Network podcast, the the health podcast, something like that. Now, I don't know who this guy is. But I didn't know there was a network of podcasts that some meter was promoting that were related to health.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:35

So you know, he's thinking he'll reach out to that person. So all the things that I've done, to solve all those problems that I had at the very beginning, people not understanding, you know, medical professionals not going about things the right way or that that's all now starting to come together to impact them positively, and address some of those issues that I had with them way back when

Gaymarie Mino 1:15:01

So you know, that kind of leads me to why the title of your book, then you tell people what the name of it is?

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:12

Yeah, it's a weird name, isn't it? Yes, the unexpected way that a stroke became the best thing that happened. So the first time I spoke about the book on my channel, my YouTube channel. Somebody, the first response I got was, this is ridiculous. How could you be promoting stroke as something for people to experience and all that kind of stuff

Gaymarie Mino 1:15:39

for which you're not. And you have

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:41

Did you miss the point completely? Right, just read the title, the unexpected way, it was unexpected. That stroke became the best thing that happened. I didn't see it coming. And clearly, it wasn't the best thing that happened at the beginning. It just became that. And I'm still living with all the deficits and the stuff that stroke has caused.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:07

But I have grown so much as a person I've developed so much further and deeper than I ever would have if wasn't for the stroke. When I look back on it, from a personal growth perspective, it's the best thing that ever happened to me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:24

Now, do I want people to have strokes? No. I do have strokes. is a fun? No. Is it easy when people have strokes on family or friends? No, none of that stuff's good. All that's terrible.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:41

However, there's a silver lining and the silver lining is that in the search for solutions to my problems, I did all the things that you and I spoke about, I reached out to people, I needed to connect with people, I needed to share the information I needed to learn information.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:58

I created a podcast. And as I created the podcast and started to have many of these conversations, after about 50 or 60 conversations, I realized how far I've come. Yeah, I've met these people and what I've learned what I've overcome, and what I've grown, and how I've helped those people overcome, that's what you learn.

Gaymarie Mino 1:17:20

Yeah, that's amazing. What do you learn, given a pass it on to other people, too,

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:25

to make their recovery easier, you know, and they passed stuff on to me to make my recovery easier. And I never had such a community before stroke. I didn't have such people who understood me so deeply, who were willing to meet a stranger on a podcast and have a conversation for over an hour. And we got along like a house on fire.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:47

So my car that I didn't know people like this existed my world entirely became a more amazing thing, right? And I said for, I didn't realize I was saying it. And I said to this particular person during the interview, I said, I think strokes are the best thing that happened to me. And then, and then I kind of oh my god, like what did I just say? And that person said the same thing to me. And I was stunned.

Bill Gasiamis 1:18:18

I didn't believe that. Another person could get to that stage let alone me. So at around that time when I had this idea, one of the people who I write about in the book is one of my teachers guy called Marvin Oka, he was running this particular course, it's called the behavioral modeling course. And what they do is they model behaviors of people that you want to replicate.

Bill Gasiamis 1:18:45

For example, like a world champion, athlete, or maybe a diver, you want to model this system that they do internally in their body, how they think, how they talk to themselves, how they behave, how they train, how they dive, how they move off the board, you want to understand like what a gold medalist does.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:05

And then you want to tell that to somebody who's just coming up in the ranks and you want to teach them. This is what a gold medalist does differently from what you do. So they model people's behavior, and they teach other people. So, my friend, Marvin Oka was running this course.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:22

And he said, When you come to the course, it's a behavioral modeling course you're going to have to learn the method that we're going to use to teach

excellence to other people. But you have to have a project to do. You're not just going to come and learn this stuff. You have to start a project when you come to this course.

Bill Gasiamis 1:19:45

I went there not knowing whether it was possible but They said, what's your project and I thought, I think I want to do more projects is going to be like, is it possible that other people think strokes the best thing that happened to them and if it is how How did I get there?

Bill Gasiamis 1:20:02

And then I had about 4000 followers on Instagram at that stage. And Marvin said, Why don't you ask your Instagram followers? If anyone else can say, amazing,

Gaymarie Mino 1:20:16

right? And I would never think that

Bill Gasiamis 1:20:20

yeah, I asked them and they all said, No, it's the worst thing blah, blah, blah. And then there were about 12 people who said, Yes, it's the best thing that happened to me. And that's it. We were on. And then I was like, Okay, let me interview you, and find out what we had in common.

Bill Gasiamis 1:20:40

And that is what the book is about. So this is what they had in common. I'll briefly go. Yeah, please. So they had that I had, they had a stroke recovery mindset. Okay, so this was obvious. It came out in the interview, that like was obvious that they had a mindset that was about solving problems and recovery, not a pity party mindset. Most of them. They did recover.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:08

Sometimes, like you and me, we did pity parties, but pity party was a very short amount of time. Then, remember, we spoke about the gut brain? Yeah, they attended to their instinct, Wow,

Gaymarie Mino 1:21:27

that's crazy.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:28

They didn't use those words. But they attended to their gut, their identity, which by the way, your identity resides in your gut, your gut instinct, they tended to listen to their gut, and they tended to be guided by their gut. So they did that. Then they listen to this one, then they attend to their emotional needs. Okay. And the heart, by the way, has neurons in it as well.

Gaymarie Mino 1:22:02

So I did not know that either, right?

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:05

The heart has between 30,000 and 120,000 neurons. And it also is intelligence because sometimes we use gut language and we use our language when we say stuff, like, I wear my heart on my sleeve. Or my heart was not in that I wasn't, I wasn't gonna do that. My heart's not in it. Or people say I followed my gut. Yeah, okay. So well, that's not the head.

How stroke led to finding purpose

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:36

We're not dealing with head intelligence. These are other emotions, so they're tied to the emotional. Then they discovered and learned about Neuroplasticity, and they started to iThey Neuroplasticity changes. They understood that going to therapy, physical therapy was rewiring the brain, and they dealt with that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:57

So in that chapter Neuroplasticity chapter also talks about the negative side of Neuroplasticity, which is when you're, when you're thinking negatively and being negative, and that's all you're doing, you're negatively rewiring the brain. So you're using Neuroplasticity but for evil. So then, they also attended to their nutrition.

Bill Gasiamis 1:23:23

They improve their nutrition, they stop drinking something or they start eating something or they stop smoking or they start this or they stop that then they all in the end sleep better. sleeping better.

Bill Gasiamis 1:23:39

So one of the things about sleeping better is that it's when your brain is being

flushed of toxins in the middle of the night when you're sleeping part of the sleep cycle, it decreases the size of the brain cells. And as they decrease, cerebrospinal fluid can go through the brain much easier. It flushes out the day's toxins and it gets them now right

Gaymarie Mino 1:24:07

here.

Bill Gasiamis 1:24:08

Right? So that's that they what else did they do? I said nutrition I said sleep they started following their heart's desires. This is a cool one. Right? So you might have felt this as well because I felt it and I didn't know what was happening at the beginning. It was like all of my decisions just to be head-based. I need to work more. I need to do this. I need to do that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:24:42

I need to buy this car I need to buy this house. I need to do that I need to do this. And then it started beginning it started going well. I don't give a shit about making more money now. Like I want to do something that I love and that I enjoy. What do I love, or enjoy I want to go on a trip or I want to experience this I want to go to a show I want to see a ballet, or whatever.

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:01

And I started to do things that I enjoyed. So they started to attend to following their heart's desires and live heartfully. I call it living heartfully instead of mindfully, they'll start living heartfully. Then they started to help out other people, and they improved the community.

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:23

So some people left their communities. Some people who came into their community, then reached out to other people to bring them into the community. And they just their friendship group changed, almost by itself, but also with a little bit of fine-tuning by them, and they found new people who were going to support them in this journey.

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:47

And then all of them said that they found their purpose. But they didn't start with purpose. That didn't start with I'm going to go on life purpose. They did all these other things, and then their life purpose emerged. And it's what happened to me

and my life purpose became, I think I'm gonna do a podcast about strokes of my life.

Bill Gasiamis 1:26:13

Yeah, and it's not I didn't know that that was gonna be my purpose. When I started the podcast, it was selfish, I started to help me recover to help me. And then it became, oh, my God, this is not just about me, this is about other people.

Bill Gasiamis 1:26:28

My purpose emerged, and they found that their purpose demerged, and it was always related to helping other people, supporting other people, and teaching other people like helping them grow, and overcome. And it's like, wow. So when you go back to stroke, and you think all these things happened, because I had three brain hemorrhages.

Bill Gasiamis 1:26:52

Right? How could a stroke not be the best thing that happened to me? It doesn't matter what the deficits were. It doesn't matter how bad they were, how good they were, it doesn't matter what I have to live with.

Bill Gasiamis 1:27:04

Whether they're working or not working, it doesn't matter what background they're from, what culture they grew up in, it doesn't matter what color their skin is, it doesn't matter what their religion is. All the people that I interviewed are completely different. All of them think that stroke was the best thing that happened to them. All of them had those 10 things in common. We had a title but the truth?

Gaymarie Mino 1:27:28

Well, it's a good time, because it made me stop and go hmm. I mean, but I think when you put it that way, and it's explained that way, I think more people need to realize we're never going to be those people we were pre-stroke.

Gaymarie Mino 1:27:47

I'm a different person now. To be honest, I like myself better now than I did back then. And I think that's one of the advantages of having a stroke is I didn't have a choice. I had to become this person. And I'm glad I did. Now, is there any other thing?

Bill Gasiamis 1:28:11

I just want to go back to things, say you remained your old self, could that old self recover from all the stuff that you were dealt with? If you stayed the same?

Gaymarie Mino 1:28:27

I don't think she would have cared. I mean, let me rephrase that. She would have cared, but she would have gone on but in a different way. Like, okay, that happened to me. I was very tough, very victim-ish, I guess. Like things happen to me. And I'm like, yeah, that did happen. But I'm not going to be a victim because I figure how you act is half the process.

Gaymarie Mino 1:28:59

And she was like, everything happens to me, why me Poor me? Like, well, that was me in the beginning. I'm gonna be honest, but now it's like, no, forget all you guys. I'm gonna show you and watch me go and who comes along with me? What a privilege to see me blossom into the person I'm becoming. That might not mean like, what do you call it conceited or whatever? It's just, it's a privilege to watch this process.

Bill Gasiamis 1:29:32

Yeah, it's the truth.

Bill's future goals

Gaymarie Mino 1:29:37

So are there any other goals publicly or privately you'd like to achieve for yourself?

Bill Gasiamis 1:29:44

So the podcast has, you know, been a labor of love. I'd love it to become my full-time job. That's probably what I would like it to be so that I can do it more, wholeheartedly than I'm doing it now. Because now I'm doing it part-time, so to speak in my spare time. And then I'd love to be able to do public speaking about it regularly and share the story of how to turn the worst thing that happened to you into the best thing that happened to you.

Gaymarie Mino 1:30:20

But you're doing that, aren't you?

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:21

I am to an extent, but I'd love it to be my career, where it's not at the moment. But that's about it. I don't have any other major goals and I want to write another book. I think I know what that book is going to be about. But that's maybe a couple of years away.

Gaymarie Mino 1:30:37

Was this your first book?

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:39

Yeah, this is again, this is another thing like the best thing. I've never written a book. I didn't even know how to write a book.

Gaymarie Mino 1:30:47

I don't know if I have the attention span to do a book.

Bill Gasiamis 1:30:50

Well didn't either. But it took four years like, yeah, it's hard for a stroke survivor to write a book. I didn't write a book when my brain was working, you know. So I think I want to write another book and speak to a few more people publicly. And just be the biggest podcast about stroke recovery in the world.

Bill Gasiamis 1:31:14

You know, why not be that I think they're my goals. No matter what is happening out there, with all the great things that people are doing, there's still not enough information, there's one in four going to have a stroke in their lifetime. Which means that I'm never going to be able to meet the need by myself. Other people are going to have to do that as well. So that's it. They're my goals.

Gaymarie Mino 1:31:42

One thing, that's one thing that's great about doing what we do is we make a bunch of people feel the same way. And they're doing amazing things that either are in Poke ly, or they're not, but they're still doing amazing things. And every time I interview somebody, or talk to somebody about this, I always learn something.

Gaymarie Mino 1:32:07

And that's the best part about what we do is we keep learning, there's always something to be learned and to be shared, you know because you have helped me

today. And I appreciate it. And I know my viewers are going, oh my god, this is amazing. So I appreciate it. And again, I'm sorry. The other day, I thank you for being so gracious and patient with me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:32:36

Absolutely. It was my pleasure, no trouble at all. Thank you for having me.

Gaymarie Mino 1:32:40

Thank you. I hope you continue healing 100% And as I always say to my viewers, celebrate every victory big or small, because that's really what it is about. So, thank you again, Bill.

Bill Gasiamis 1:32:56

My pleasure.