

The Benefits Of Exercise In Stroke Recovery - Rachel Keele

Rachel Keele has a master's of Arts in Educational Psychology and is a certified mobility trainer and she believes that her good overall health before the stroke had a positive outcome on her stroke recovery.

Facebook

Instagram

Highlights:

01:59 Introduction

02:28 The Cause of Stroke

11:46 Not Getting Enough Information

19:32 Now Is The Time!

25:32 Acceptance

28:40 Stroke Is The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me

36:03 Exercise In Stroke Recovery

43:51 Everything Is Connected

50:25 Finding A Community

1:00:03 Importance Of Nutrition

1:10:09 The Hardest Times

1:18:33 What Stroke Taught Rachel Keele

Transcription:

Rachel Keele 0:00

But the stroke experience really I think maybe intensified the trajectory towards health and wellness that I had. And I'm still me like, I still love sitting on the couch and I love eating pizza and whatever, like that's still me. But the benefits that I get out of health and fitness are just so great now.

Rachel Keele 0:21

So I had become really outspoken about it. It was something that I talked about a lot on social media and it kind of created this platform and my stroke experience was all a big part of that, like, that's another reason I wouldn't change anything

because it's been in that sounds like a stepping stone to where I am now.

Intro 0:42

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

Bill Gasiamis 0:55

Hello, and welcome to episode 219 of the recovery after stroke podcast. If you are a stroke survivor with a story to share about your experience, come and join me on the show. The interviews are not scripted, you do not have to plan for them. All you need to do is be a stroke survivor or care for someone who is a stroke survivor, or help people who are stroke survivors.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14

So if you go to recoveryafterstroke.com, fill out the form there. And as soon as I receive it, I will respond with more details on how you can choose a time that works for you and me to meet over zoom. Also, I would love to hear from people that may have stroke-related questions so I can compile some and make some shorter episodes that give you my perspective on your burning recovery questions.

Bill Gasiamis 1:37

Of course, they cannot be specifically medical in nature as I'm not a doctor. And I cannot comment on your situation. But they can be about other stroke-related matters. If you go to recoveryafterstroke.com/contact once again, this time select the "Ask Bill A Question" in the subject field leave the question for me, and when I have enough of them, I will make an episode dedicated to your questions.

Introduction



Bill Gasiamis 1:59

Now. My guest today is Rachel Keele. Rachel has a Master's of Arts in Educational Psychology and is a certified mobility trainer. And she believes that her good overall health before the stroke had a positive outcome and played a massive role on her stroke recovery. Rachel Keele, welcome to the podcast.

Rachel Keele 2:20

Thank you very much. Thanks for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 2:22

My pleasure. Thank you for being here. Tell me a little bit about what happened to you Rachel.

The Cause of Stroke



Rachel Keele 2:28

Oh, a little bit about what happened to me. So back in March of 2016, when I was 29 years old, I had a little mishap at the CrossFit gym that I worked out at regularly. I was like, trying to do something stupid. I was like trying to balance on something in a handstand and I fell and hit my face on a weight and hyperextending my neck and basically it like clamped the arteries shut.

Rachel Keele 3:01

Of course, I didn't know that. And so I was just like really thankful I didn't break my nose at the time and I did a workout. And the next day I came back and I did another workout and then after that second one, like maybe you know 36 hours later or something my neck started to hurt really bad, popped a couple ibuprofen and was going on with my day went to work.

Rachel Keele 3:26

And felt a little bit better. I mean, it was I was at work for probably six hours or so. And then all of a sudden I'm like at the copier, making some copies and the room started to spin. And I thought I was gonna pass out I laid down on the floor and just like waited to blackout and it never happened.

Rachel Keele 3:47

And I got very nauseous, started throwing up, and my husband came and took me home and everyone thought I had food poisoning. They're like, what did you eat for breakfast? And I was like, leftover beef Shawarma. So they're like, Oh, she's got food poisoning.

Rachel Keele 4:04

But I was like, I've grown up like six times now and I don't feel any better. So he took me home. And then probably like, an hour after the initial like vertigo and nausea and stuff. I lost like all the feeling on my left side, like head to toe. No control or whatever.

Rachel Keele 4:22

So I knew nothing about strokes at that time that didn't like I mean, it seemed serious. And so we went to the ER. And they seem to immediately know like, they immediately started a stroke protocol, which now I feel very fortunate for because I've connected with a lot of people since then my age, who at the hospital were misdiagnosed and never got the treatment that they should have.

Rachel Keele 4:45

So I feel very lucky in that sense. They were aware of what was going on and they immediately like started doing scans and saw that there was a blockage there and told me that but even then, like I just knew so little I was like, Oh yeah, I've got a blockage in the vertebral artery and it meant nothing to me. Like, can you guys fix that? So, yeah, they did the treatment and the clot buster, all that stuff. Yeah, go ahead.

Bill Gasiamis 5:11

I was just gonna say is ignorance bliss at that time?

Rachel Keele 5:15

Yeah, kind of, I've had so many people be like you must have been so scared? And I'm like, honestly no, I was at the hospital and I'm like these people know what they're doing and it never occurred to me, the first time anyone said the word stroke was like, the next day, you know, I spent the night in the ICU after they did you know, the treatment and everything, and they were coming in and checking on me.

Rachel Keele 5:43

And already some of my feeling and motion was starting to return. So they're like, oh, you should be fine in a few months. And I was like, what? But even then I'm just like, okay, like, I don't know what's going on. And then I think like the following evening, someone was like, Oh, well, what happened was after I had an MRI and all that stuff, they're like you had a stroke.

Rachel Keele 6:08

And I was like, what? I was so confused. In fact, I think what they said was, you experienced an infarction, and I was like, excuse me, and they're like, oh, like a stroke. And I was like, like a stroke or a stroke? And they're like, you had a stroke. And I was like, okay. So I mean, that's kind of how it all happened.

Bill Gasiamis 6:32

The technicalities of stroke, so varied, like there's so many ways to get to oxygen being depleted from the brain cells. There's so many ways to get there. I didn't know for probably nearly two and a half years, two years that I actually had a stroke, and the reason they didn't tell me is because mine was a hemorrhagic stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 6:55

It was as a result of an AVM. And the AVM is an arteriovenous malformation, which is technically a tumor that's benign in the head. And because the bleed was inside the tumor, which was inside the head, I technically didn't have a stroke, or a hemorrhagic stroke, I had a bleed within a tumor.

Bill Gasiamis 7:15

And it's like, but the symptoms all mimic the stroke symptoms, and I feel spaced out, I didn't know who my wife was I didn't know my name, I couldn't walk, talk all the things that I experienced with a two and a half years before brain surgery we're all stroke-like symptoms.

Bill Gasiamis 7:37

Somebody gives me a label, just so I can work with it and not feel like I don't belong anywhere. I already feel like I don't belong anywhere, because I'm a 37 year old who's had a stroke. And nobody I know has ever had a stroke. So I don't know what to do with that information, let alone the fact that for two and a half years, almost, I don't know that it could be considered a hemorrhagic stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 8:03

Like wow, guys, thank you, somebody. It's so weirdly liberating knowing what it was that I had. Now, I was like you oblivious to the seriousness of the whole thing at the beginning, because my left side eventually went completely numb after I ignored the numbness for seven days.

Bill Gasiamis 8:31

And I was like you. I know it's serious. I'll get with my chiropractor but it's not like that serious. I'm not going to die because of this. It's not going to leave me, you know, disabled or unable to work or anything. It's just numbness, you know, it's no big deal. I was kind of like you oblivious. And it was good to be oblivious a little bit at the beginning. And then shit got real three months later. And it's like, this is not what I thought it was gonna be. Sounds like you also had that similar type of experience.

Rachel Keele 9:09

Yeah, it was, it was similar in that way I was. So it was in the cerebellum below the brainstem. I didn't have like any of the confusion or any of the language issues. And actually, the morning after, when they were like running the stroke

protocols, they already done the scans and all that stuff in they were having all these specialists come in.

Rachel Keele 9:32

They first person to come in and tell me that they ran the stroke protocol. So I guess I did hear that word before. They told me I had a stroke. But she was a speech therapist, and she came in and sat by the bed and she's like, I'm here because they ran the stroke protocol. And I was like, Oh, really? And she was like, yeah, like you're talking fine you probably didn't have one that's what she told me.

Rachel Keele 9:56

I was like, yeah, I'm fine. Then later when the physical therapist comes in to get me out of bed and I can like barely walk, then I'm like, oh shoot, what's going on? And even then, they were still very positive. I was very, very active and fit at the time. And so, I mean, I still am, but I was very active. They're like, Oh, you're very healthy. Like, I think that's going to keep your prognosis good.

Rachel Keele 10:28

You'll be back to normal in a few months. And I was like, I'm not sure what this means. And I also don't think they know what normal means. Because I was training every single day, I was lifting weights, I was coaching other people that was like, part of my job was like, training other people.

Rachel Keele 10:44

And I'm like, I don't think they realize like, what normal would be for me, but yeah, So when I first came home, I came home, like probably two days later, and definitely very difficult to move around. And they had told me like, you just need to rest you need to give everything a rest, like you'll heal faster that way, okay.

Rachel Keele 11:05

But no one told me to like not go for rides in the car. And so I had a hair appointment like the next day, and it was like, 45 minutes away, like in another state, honestly. And I told my friend, I'm like, I feel horrible. But I gotta get my hair done. Like, I just want to feel good.

Rachel Keele 11:31

So she drove me to this hair appointment. By the time I got there, like all that movement from the car, I like, got there, went straight to the bathroom and threw

up, and they did my hair. And then I threw up again. And then like, came home threw up again. And then I couldn't walk anymore.

Not Getting Enough Information

Rachel Keele 11:46

And then I was like, okay, I knew I had a stroke that is very serious. But then like, I kind of had this realization of how delicate everything is. I was like, Okay, I have to take this like really seriously, I don't think they gave me enough information.

Rachel Keele 12:08

So I'm like, forever grateful that they diagnose it properly. But at the same time, I'm like, man, they basically just sent me out the door, like an occupational therapist came that morning before I left to make sure I could like, brush my teeth, and tie my shoes. And like when they were all like, yeah you're great or whatever. And meanwhile, I'm like, this is a very delicate situation. So yeah, I don't know, there were some realizations for me for sure.

Bill Gasiamis 12:33

It sounds like they downplayed it, because of your appearance. Because you looked healthy, for you looked well, and they got sucked in. And their quickness to get to that is something that I hear from time to time through other people that I've interviewed, which is like, we've got some guy who really can't do much can't move can't push himself around or can't do anything, can't toilet himself, can't brush his teeth.

Bill Gasiamis 13:03

And it's like, you compared to that person, you look pretty good. Why don't you go home and sort yourself out. And we'll put our energy and our resources into that person. And then because these people who deal with stroke, who helped us be alive and overcome this, to an extent, have never had a stroke, they've got no idea what to do, how to prepare, what to say.

Bill Gasiamis 13:30

And even if they did have some kind of clue or idea, having never had a stroke, it's the kind of working blind, they're not really working with the person. They're working with the problem. And the problem is for me, it was the bleeding blood vessel.

Bill Gasiamis 13:46

Alright, we'll take it out, and then we'll send you home. And then for you, it's like, we'll clear the blockage and then we'll send them home. And it's like, huh, there's a little bit of a gap there between the stuff that's happened and the part that now I have to do at home.

Bill Gasiamis 14:02

I drove after brain surgery in November 2014 I drove probably within about six weeks and I did the same kind of trip as you I shouldn't have done it but no one told me not to and that was enough for me because I wanted to and I needed it. I could have caused an accident I could have caused myself an injury, somebody else in injury.

Bill Gasiamis 14:37

I think what they're missing is an advocate somebody who's had a stroke to say all right, now you're about to go home. Let me tell you some things and you can call me if you're not sure about something, but they don't and I don't get why they don't but it's the same in most of the western world, you know, that's the same in the other side of the world where things are done slightly differently perhaps.

Bill Gasiamis 15:07

There is a lack of ability for people to communicate to loved ones and the stroke survivor what this means long term, ongoing rehabilitation and recovery, and you suck them in, you look healthy, because of your appearance that led them to a conclusion. And they made that hastily by the sound of things. And they do that often. And I don't blame them, but it's wrong.

Rachel Keele 15:37

Right? Well, and that's why, I love following you. And so many other people that have had stroke experiences that that was crucial for me those like several weeks after my stroke, and just being at home and recovering, like, I think maybe like four or five days after I had it, like it occurred to me.

Rachel Keele 15:59

Oh, like, there must be people on Instagram and Facebook that are like, there must be groups for this and stuff. And yeah, I just, like started looking around and found so many people our age that had gone through similar things. And you're able to like, Yeah, talk about symptoms about recovery, I've had a lot of people

reach out to me, and just, you know, it's, it's hard in some ways, because, like you're saying, like, the experiences, I mean, the way the strokes happen are so unique.

Rachel Keele 16:30

And then the experiences of each person are so unique, the recovery is so different, but at the same time, like some of those things are so common, like the headaches were some of like, the worst part of the recovery for me, and I know that's, like super common with a lot of people like, I got home and I was very, very tired, and I couldn't walk very well but you know, like you're resting.

Rachel Keele 16:51

And then after a couple of weeks, like all of a sudden, the headaches were just and I'm not someone who ever got migraines or anything like that before. And the headaches were so overwhelming, I would just like, lay in bed and cry, because I'm like, I can't even rest or whatever. But then talking to other people online, it's like, okay, this is normal, like the doctors will be like, I think that's not, like a lot of times you're like, Is it normal? Or are they just like, not sure and they don't want to say.

Rachel Keele 17:18

But other people would be like, oh, yeah, absolutely. And that lasted for about six weeks for me and whatever, you know, like, yeah, that the advocate at the hospital would be so great. But at the very least, I'm really glad I found a community of people, you know, that you can bounce things around with and be like, oh, yeah, okay, me too.

Bill Gasiamis 17:41

That's the whole reason why I did the podcasts because I didn't have anyone in my suburb that I could go to that share the experience with me. And I couldn't find them elsewhere and the resources to get to them and them to get to me. And if they've had a stroke, like, it's resource-heavy recovery, it's like, you can't overcome all those barriers, and then also be recovering from a stroke, just to get to see somebody that you can communicate with.

Bill Gasiamis 18:10

So that's the whole purpose for the podcast, you know, headaches, vision issues, you know, balance issues, skin sensation issues, muscle tightness, is it normal?

Every person that I spoke to around the hospital kind of said, well, we're not sure if it's related, but it might be, you know, everything was we're not sure but it might be.

Bill Gasiamis 18:37

I never had any of these things beforehand, you know, does it mean I'm having another stroke? Or is it just something that it's gonna be that way? Or even if it won't get better is it like, can you guide me a little bit? Can you give me some information that allows me to just have less anxiety of over the every experience that I have.

Bill Gasiamis 18:58

Because we were going to the hospital, because I had three hemorrhages over two and a half years and then brain surgery. I had a lot of experiences, like I was having another hemorrhage that weren't hemorrhages. So I was in the hospital every second month, or three weeks after the last time I went there, or, you know, in the middle of the night because we couldn't ascertain because we didn't have enough information to make a proper decision about what I was experiencing.

Now Is The Time!



Bill Gasiamis 19:32

And then it was just like, stuff it anything that happens we're going to the hospital every time. What I would suggest to other stroke survivors listening, if they don't have enough information, and if they feel sort of worried or concerned about it in their gut or wherever. That's like just go don't worry about it. And that's the only

thing you can do.

Bill Gasiamis 19:55

I mean, you're unwell, you're going through something serious you're recovering from it. Now's the time to be concerned and to be certain about what's happening. Now is not the time to second guess yourself and go "well, they didn't really say it's anything so I'm going to ignore it" you know, now's not the time.

Bill Gasiamis 20:15

So yeah, I really appreciate the fact that I've been able to find people that are like me. And now there's 5000 people on Instagram following me. And it's like, wow, that's amazing. Like, it's great that they're there. And they are my, they are helping me on my road to recovery. And so are all the people who have decided to come onto the podcast, you guys make it.

Bill Gasiamis 20:41

And, I've been at it for from 2012 and I'm still not healed, I'm still not recovered. I'm still not overcoming this yet. And I don't know if there is a goal for me to get to the end of this. It's like happiness, you just be happy. And then you just keep striving forward. And it's like, I need to talk to this regularly. And my wife doesn't need me to talk to her regularly about it everyday. And you guys help me do that you know, it's great.

Rachel Keele 21:20

Yeah, I can relate to some of that as well. Like, in the months afterwards, especially at first, my husband was so supportive and so amazing, and so helpful. But at the same time, there were certain things that I felt like I like when I got to the point of wanting to reintroduce certain like, physical activities, or whatever.

Rachel Keele 21:50

And I'm like, no, I know how I feel. And I know to be careful, but he was so concerned. And he'd be like, don't do that. He honestly, as an experience, I think in some way that was much more like traumatic for him. Because for me, I'm just like, you know, I'm just like, along for the ride, I didn't feel scared during the experience. And I think by the time I realized how serious it could have been, I was kind of on the other side of it.

Rachel Keele 22:17

But for him, it was kind of like, I think she almost died, I almost lost her. So like,

very traumatic for him in some ways. And so when I'm like, you know what, I'm going to try a handstand today. He'd be like, don't do that. So there were certain things like we would get into some arguments at that time, and certain things that I kind of had to be like, you know, I'm going to be careful.

Rachel Keele 22:42

But I think there's certain things like we probably shouldn't talk about. Like, I just kind of have to do this for me. And then I'll tell him about it later. But then also, yeah, you're dealing with so many sensations and feelings and emotion. Like, I can't just like dump that on him all the time either. He needs a break and talk about something other than strokes, for sure.

Bill Gasiamis 23:06

Yeah, right. And, I think this is the beauty of the podcast, I make it so that people can talk to me about strokes and not burden their loved ones to an extent you know, and also counseling, I went to counseling, I spoke about it with my counselor, I still do.

Bill Gasiamis 23:24

It's part of every day of my life, and it's not going to change and that's how I deal with things, I incorporate them into my world, instead of trying to disassociate from and pretend it never happened and leave it aside, I incorporate it and I gained control over it in the best of ways by sharing podcast episodes. And by speaking with other people, that's the only way I can gain control of it.

Bill Gasiamis 23:52

If I try to control how my body feels, I can't do that, because it's not going to change. I can make it worse by eating incorrectly. Or by not by not being physically active and by being sedentary but I can also make it better by nourishing my soul getting things out of my head you know and just getting the whole system operating and working rather than just sticking to head in the sand kind of stuff you know, it doesn't ever work always catches up with you that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 24:27

So I've shifted from having being dependent on my wife as the main person to go to for chit-chatting about stroke, to just mention it to her if I'm having a bad day. Look, I'm just having a bad day and it's not about because of the stroke I'm having a bad day. I'm just having a bad day I need a rest and then it just chill out,

we need to do nothing today, go on your own that type of stuff, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 24:53

And that's more general run-of-the-mill kind of conversation but for me, it's because of the stroke. But I don't reference the stroke as the cause just so that she doesn't have that constant this stroke thing, you know, 10 years later. She's supportive. And in every way, don't get me wrong. But she's over the conversation because she has never had a trauma like that. Thank God that she has to reconcile and live with and manage and any of that stuff.

Acceptance - Rachel Keele

Rachel Keele 25:32

Yeah, I hear that for sure. And I also feel like, yeah, I definitely relate to what you're saying about kind of like this, bringing it into your life instead of disassociating out like, I think it was, I don't know. I felt like it was a really powerful experience. And I was kind of like, proud to make it part of my identity.

Rachel Keele 25:56

I've always really liked feeling different or unique. Maybe everyone does, but I'm kind of like, oh, this is like a thing that like so few other people have experience. Like, I'm kind of special now. But I also just felt like it was a really empowering experience and I felt like it toughened me a lot.

Rachel Keele 26:19

Like, when I'm when I've dealt with certain things since I'm like, I'll never be as uncomfortable in as much pain hopefully as I was, I mean, I've never had kids. But like that was just like one of the hardest experiences physically for me. So now like, it's kind of a reference point, like, well I did that. So I think I'll be okay. And I don't know, like I've told many, many people, whenever I talk about it, honestly, I'm like, I would never change a thing.

Rachel Keele 26:52

Honestly and I say this as someone who has been able to experience a lot of recovery, like, I'm very privileged with my experience in so many ways. But I would never, undo that experience, or not go through that if I could do it all again, I would do it all again, because I think I'm a stronger and also more sensitive person now like, another thing that I think came out of that experience

was having that sort of thing where so many people reach out to you and support you and you realize, like how meaningful that can be.

Rachel Keele 27:30

When someone you might not even know very well just like offers words of encouragement or stop by or whatever. And I have been kind of a person who like, you know, I might see somebody's going through something on social media. But if I don't know them very well, I don't say anything. You know what, something like that. And now, I try to be like, way more intentional about that stuff.

Rachel Keele 27:47

Like, even if I don't know you very well, I want to offer that support, because I know how much it meant to me. So I just like who I am better now. Because of the experience. It just grew me in so many ways. And I think it's strengthened my marriage in so many ways. And so, yeah, I mean, it's an amazing thing, that something can be the hardest part of your life, you know, but bring, there can be so many good things that come out of it.

Rachel Keele 28:13

I'm a person of faith. And so I believe that like, God doesn't like design trials for us. But he can take anything negative that happens to us and utilize it for our good. Like, that's how I believe he operates. And I feel like 100% That's what happened in my life. Like, it was a really difficult experience possibly could have killed me, but has been so positive in the long run.

Stroke Is The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me

Bill Gasiamis 28:40

Well, I can relate to that. I'm not shy about bragging about the fact that I'm writing a book that's called Stroke Is The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me.

Rachel Keele 28:52

It's perfect.

Bill Gasiamis 28:54

And it's like 10 chapters long, and I just finished chapter seven. And when I

researched the book, I interviewed stroke survivors who thought the same thing. And we have a lot of things that we did in common that got me to the 10 chapters. I didn't design the book, they designed the book, because in the conversations that I had with them when I was modeling how they got two Stroke is the best thing that happened to them, they all said the same 10 things that I said it was ridiculous.

Bill Gasiamis 29:28

And then it's like okay, so here's a path forward that perhaps we can move people from stroke being the worst thing to stroke being the best thing. And that's not to take away from your experience, the seriousness, your deficits, what you're left, with what you had to overcome, what you had to grow from, but I went to personal development courses for about 10 years before my stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 29:53

They were nothing compared to the development of my person after stroke and the empathy that I grew, and the understanding that I developed, and the sympathy that I am able to express without being friggin stupid about being sympathizing for the wrong things.

Bill Gasiamis 30:13

And what it taught me I can overcome and how I can still use my instincts to guide my life forward. Because my brain doesn't work. It's switched off. So I can tap into my gut instinct and my emotional intelligence and move forward. You know, I've grown there. And it's like, how could the bloke who was as thick as I was, before stroke, had he kept going on the same path that it was, how would that person ever have grown to the extent that I have doing podcasts and interviewing people from all over the world and writing a book and stuff that had never been on my horizon that I had never, ever contemplated being possible for me.

Bill Gasiamis 30:58

And I had so many negative, even though I portrayed this confident person, I had so much self-doubt and negative self talk, that things that were possible for the average layperson were not possible for me because I wasn't that good. Or I wasn't that guy, or I didn't identify as that person or sissies do that, or a whole bunch of stuff, you know, that was just stuck with me from my schooling, my teenage years, my old friends, or whoever they were my social groups.

Bill Gasiamis 31:42

And it's like, I think now, I'm going to actually question every single thing, everything that you say everything that I say, everything I say about myself, everything I say about you, everything, I think about you everything I feel about them. And it's like, it's all bullshit, I made it all up, I'm gonna make it up again, this time, I'm going to make it up so that it's actually meaningful, and useful and helpful and fantastic. And it's like, I think I can make up that story. I'm way better at making up stories in the positive because in the end, I feel good about them. So I'll do some more of those.

Rachel Keele 32:24

That's amazing. No, I love that. And I can't wait to read your book, that's gonna be so cool.

Bill Gasiamis 32:29

It's the hardest thing I've ever had to do is write a book. It's the hardest thing ever. And I've got a book coach. And she's been dragging me along for 18 months to try and get me over the line. And she keeps checking in with me. And I keep ignoring her because I don't want to say to her, I haven't written anything for a month. And she doesn't care. She loves me anyway, she just wants me to come on board.

Bill Gasiamis 32:54

But the last chapter I just finished, which is something I want to talk to you about, specifically, the last chapter, I finished is Let's Get Physical. And it was one of the hardest chapters for me to write because of the immense benefits that exercise has for the brain.

Bill Gasiamis 33:13

And especially in recovery, and we're talking about exercise, which is literally, if it was you know, if I can break it down to the smallest type of exercise that some people might be pulling out weeds from the garden for 20 minutes. Even that. Tell me about your career in I think it's wellness or health and wellness before the stroke. And then I want to talk about how that evolved later after the stroke, tell me how it started.

Rachel Keele 33:45

Yeah, so I always tell people that I'm a reformed couch potato, and that if I can

become an active person that anyone can, because my natural state is just like, yeah, couch potato, like, boy, I am very happy just watching TV, like sitting around eating something. I have, like a corner of my sofa that's like worn in because I always sit there.

Bill Gasiamis 34:15

Like Homer Simpson.

Rachel Keele 34:17

Yeah, exactly. I'm Homer Simpson. But before, I mean, I'm very average in the fact that I like was always like, wildly insecure about my physical appearance, it was a very normal thing and like, never happy with my weight. And I have kind of like I posted a lot on social media recently, actually, about my history of disordered eating and things like that.

Rachel Keele 34:49

But a few years before the stroke happened, because I told you it happened at the gym. Well, I mean, the accident happened at the gym. I had done some different seems like I've tried doing some triathlons and stuff. And just like nothing really had me working out regularly. And then I tried out CrossFit and just kind of fell in love with that we had some friends open up a CrossFit gym here in our community. And I started doing that all the time and became a coach after about a year or so doing CrossFit.

Rachel Keele 35:18

And so, I mean, that was probably, my stroke happened little over two years after I had kind of gotten into CrossFit. So at that point, I was like, exercising all the time, like six days a week, you know, I'm there for a couple hours a day, like very active, and I was coaching people. And then the stroke happened. And that really like, I feel like I would still be an active person.

Rachel Keele 35:47

But that really kind of like solidified how important that had been. I often was like, man because it was just like accident induced, and they don't really understand the type of like, where the arteries and my artery is still occluded back there, like it's still stuck together.

Exercise In Stroke Recovery



Rachel Keele 36:03

And they're like, yeah, it just happened sometimes, like, it's not supposed to happen. But to some people, it just happens, right? It could have happened a few years earlier, when I wasn't nearly as healthy or fit. And that kind of like, rung in my brain for a long time. So I'm like, man, like, the importance of what we do with our physical bodies is just so great.

Rachel Keele 36:25

Like, in some ways, I feel like exercise saved my life. So it really became a mission to me, I already kind of had, you know, like I was coaching at that time. And so it just became a bigger deal to me, I transitioned jobs at that point. I've worked on a university campus for the last 11 years or so. And I was working in the residence halls and I transitioned to where I was overseeing a health club in one of our residence halls.

Rachel Keele 36:51

And I oversaw a lot of programming that happened like educational programming that happened the residence hall. So I started speaking a lot about fitness and health, and how you know, I'm like, You guys think you're invincible, because you're in college, but like, you could be in a car accident tomorrow, you could be injured or get sick, or ill, like anything could happen to you at any time.

Rachel Keele 37:17

And the healthier you are, the better your outcomes are gonna be like, that just kind of became my mantra. I started teaching group fitness on our campus, we built a big, beautiful facility back in 2019. And I was an instructor there along with my regular responsibilities on campus, and then COVID hit. And the managers for that facility left and I was like, kind of just the person around.

Rachel Keele 37:42

But over those few years, I'd become a personal trainer, I was doing that out of our home, we built a gym in our garage, I became a nutrition coach, and I just tried to like do new certifications every year. The stroke experience really like I think, maybe intensify the trajectory towards health and wellness that I had. And I'm still me, like, I still love sitting on the couch. And I like eating pizza and whatever, like that's still me but.

Intro 38:13

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

Intro 38:38

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

Intro 38:58

These seven questions are the ones Bill wished he'd asked when he was recovering from a stroke, they'll not only help you better understand your condition, and they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery. Head to the website. Now, recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide. It's free.

Rachel Keele 39:14

The benefits that I get out of health and fitness are just so great now. So I had become really outspoken about it. It was something that I talked about a lot on social media and it kind of created this platform and my stroke experience was all a big part of that like that's another reason I wouldn't change anything because it's been in that sense like a stepping stone to where I am now.

Rachel Keele 39:38

So at the beginning of COVID I was kind of like moved over to take management of our facility or wellness facility on campus. And then a year after that they gave me the responsibilities of what like our wellness programs on campus like for the

campus so I'm Director of University wellness for our Andrews University of the campus that I work at and I manage our fitness facility, I still instruct classes because I love doing that.

Rachel Keele 39:38

So sometimes, like, if you look through my social media, you'll see I post about that, like the different classes that I teach. And I do nutrition coaching with people, I do food demos, and all that kind of thing. Like, that's my life now.

Bill Gasiamis 40:23

It sounds like you had life experience to make what you were doing before the stroke, actually valuable, if not more valuable than before. So like, it seems like the trajectory took like it spiked, you know, your curiosity about how to apply health and wellness to stroke recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 40:50

And now you've got life experience to wrap, a purpose to wrap that wellness around, you know, and it's like me, I always had the opinion that I should be talking to people and advising them of stuff and letting them know how amazing some of the things are that I know, but I never did it because I didn't really have life experience to wrap it around. I had just years on Earth where I was doing the exact same thing for the same amount of years.

Bill Gasiamis 41:19

But then one day, I had this strike, and it's now okay, I think I found my purpose, the reason I had the desire to express myself and share my point of view and hopefully learn from other people's point of views and then create a conversation around this thing that I am experiencing in my life.

Bill Gasiamis 41:43

I think the reason for that not taking off yet was because I hadn't had the thing that needed to happen for me to then make it possible for me to bring my wisdom into a conversation that was relevant to other people, because I didn't know how to relate to other people.

Bill Gasiamis 42:03

And the last thing that I was going to relate to other people about was stroke. Obviously, I couldn't possibly have done that before. But now that I do, I get you and you get me and it's like, no one's ever got me before. And that's why what I

do works there because they get me and they don't take what I say the wrong way.

Bill Gasiamis 42:25

Or they don't take it in a way where they don't know how it applies to them previously, or so. I don't have anything in common with this guy to know how to apply what he's saying to me. Whereas now it's like, I have a lot in common with this guy. I know what he's saying what his guests are saying. And I know how to apply that to me and how to make a part of my journey recovery my story.

Bill Gasiamis 42:47

So this is kind of like an opportunity for me to tell people also that are listening and watching this saying like, maybe you've just found something to use to be the platform for that thing that you've been putting off that you haven't done yet. And that sounds like what happened to you. It became bigger than just going to the gym and not being a couch potato. Now there's other things that are wrapped up in it.

Rachel Keele 43:17

Yeah, I think it was like, at that point, it was like a hobby. And then after my stroke experience, it was a complete, like, passion and life course. Like that's, that's where I'm headed. And I I definitely like talk to people on social media mine about, you know, recoveries, but so much of what I do in my setting is talking to people about preventative because most of the people I interact with or work and whatever else, of course, have never had a stroke, you know?

Everything Is Connected - Rachel Keele

Rachel Keele 43:51

And so, like, prepare yourself for whatever happens, like hopefully you never have a stroke, but probably you aren't going to get through life without something serious happening, you know, and even if it's not a physical thing, like you were saying, physical activity has such a huge impact on the brain. And in a college setting right now, anyone that works with young people will tell you there's like a huge mental health crisis.

Rachel Keele 44:19

I mean, it's around the world. But like, and with all age groups, but definitely for

young people. And what physical activity can do for your mental health is just crazy. You know, yes like brain health, like physiological health, but then also just how you think and feel and I mean, your hormones are a big part of that exercise has a huge impact on your hormones and your hormones have a huge impact on your brain function.

Rachel Keele 44:48

And you know, like, everything is connected like, like your exercise can improve your sleep, which can improve your brain function which can improve and motivate how you exercise like it's just all connected. And the cool thing about that, like, yes, like a problem at any one area can cause problems and other areas. But an improvement in any one area can create improvements in all other areas as well. Like, I can't overstate how important movement is. And of course, healthy eating and all that. But yes it's so important. Please move everybody please move.

Rachel Keele 44:48

Yeah, you just explained the outline of the book, basically, is what it said. And one of the hardest things was I was trying to order the chapters of importance. And it's like, it's impossible to say that mindset is the most important thing. And, but I'm putting that first. Because if somebody is completely sedentary, and they're doing nothing because of a stroke, but I can influence their mindset, then we got a good chance, start there.

Bill Gasiamis 46:02

And I know that's going to do exactly what he said, it's going to influence that, that, that, and that, and then that. And then we've got a good positive spiral occurring, you know, and then it was like, but nutrition is really important in and if they're just sitting down, and I can get him to eat really well. Maybe, if I could just get him to wait really well, and they can't move or do anything that's gonna do that.

Bill Gasiamis 46:21

And then it's like, that can go first. But it's not going to go first, I'm going to put that third because I reckon if they have emotional intelligence, that'll be pretty good. Like, if I can get them to go to their emotions, and feel them and talk about them and express them. And, you know, that's going to lift their mood and their spirit, and they're going to feel lighter, and that's going to make their muscles work better. And that's going to help them sleep better and be less anxious. And

my God, that could be the first chapter.

Rachel Keele 46:50

Maybe instead of a book, you should just have like, sections that come in like a container. And then you can just, anyone can order them how they want. Because yeah, you're totally right. Like it could start anywhere. And I tell people this a lot too like, people will ask how do I get motivated to start exercising or eating right or whatever. And I'm like, you can't always wait for motivation.

Rachel Keele 47:17

Sometimes it hits and then like, run with it. But other times, you literally just have to make a conscious choice about doing something and you do it. And then you feel really good afterwards, like or the motivation grows from there. But you may not be able to get into the right mindset one day about getting up and making like positive choices.

Rachel Keele 47:41

But you may just be able to force yourself to get out of bed, you might not feel good about it or like have good thoughts about it, you might hate every second of it initially. But if you get up and get going, sometimes it will grow from there. Like just pick where you can start, just pick one.

Bill Gasiamis 47:57

Choose one. Yeah. And what I love about what you said is we'll call it force yourself to exercise when you're not motivated to exercise. You will love it later but what's really important is you need to pay attention to later you need to be aware that later happened. And you need to be aware that later happened because of earlier. And it's like join the two like if you feel great, it's because you went to the gym or you exercised or you pulled weeds out or whatever it was, yeah, your bodies are aching, and you're whinging about it.

Bill Gasiamis 48:32

But something's changed and shifted in your mind and in your spirit and in the way that your clarity has returned for a moment, it's probably because of the exercise. Don't just put it down to something that I experienced, then I don't know what it is. It's the exercise because exercise increases dopamine, it inclusive increases serotonin, it increases it decreases anxiety decreases blood pressure, it increases every positive thing marker in your body.

Bill Gasiamis 49:02

And it decreases all the negative ones. As soon as you do it. My son, who's 26 My oldest is 26. He was struggling with anxiety, what the kids call, when I say the kids, my generation didn't speak about feelings. Like their generation does. They talk about anxiety, and they don't even know the definition of it. They've heard it somewhere. They've applied anxiety to everything.

Bill Gasiamis 49:29

And it's like, what specifically do you mean when you say anxiety? Do you even know what the definition is? Could it be something similar but different or something completely different that you're misdiagnosing that you're labeling yourself and it's like, in the meantime, go and do some exercise and he found like everyone at the moment seems to be finding Brazilian jujitsu.

Bill Gasiamis 49:51

Who would have thought that my 26-year-old son is going to benefit from rolling around with other men in a sweaty stinky bloody outfit on the ground for an hour, every second day, and then getting treated in a way that's difficult for him to overcome. So it causes a lot of discomfort, you have to find the way out of the hole that they've got you in, you have to try and combat what the person is about to do to you, and you need to do it back to them so that you can win the bout.

Finding A Community

Bill Gasiamis 50:25

And it's like, who would have thought that your "anxiety" which I believe people have, is gonna go away by you rolling around on the ground with another man? Wow, oh my gosh, is that what jujitsu is about? Oh, man, that is fantastic. Talk about getting, you know, feeling close to men to other men, you know, where society tells you, you know, let's not do that manly stuff, but it's okay, if we're kind of almost killing each other and rolling around, passing sweat off and all that.

Bill Gasiamis 51:02

But let's not do it in the other way. You know, like, it's amazing how much of a benefit exercise causes and the closeness and the bonds that is created with these people. Because I think they're both experiencing in a community, the decrease in anxiety and depression and blood pressure and all that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 51:23

And the increase in dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and all the other stuff that makes your brain work and fire and make you feel happy and healthy. You know, it's brilliant, how in a community, it happens way better than you could possibly do it on your own.

Rachel Keele 51:38

Yeah. And that's like, you touched on two things there that I think a lot of people don't talk about much with exercise is that if you are willing to willing to do it consistently and regularly, most often, unless you're just doing it at home by yourself, which is still an excellent thing to do, if that's what you want to do. But there's a lot of community to be found.

Rachel Keele 51:59

So I teach group fitness classes now. And people have their favorite classes, they come to those classes regularly, they get to know each other, then they're accountable to one another. They're like messaging each other when they don't show up and, and they're cracking jokes, and they're hanging out outside of class, like the social component is huge.

Rachel Keele 52:19

And you see that, like on the fitness floors as well, people, they come at the same time, they get to know each other, they have their gym bros, you know, their gym buddies, or whatever, that social component is huge. But also, you kind of touched on the fact like, oh, like, you know, he's having to like, figure out how to get out of these holes. It's kind of like this problem solving situation.

Rachel Keele 52:41

And there's so much that happens in a physical setting that can be applied to other areas of life. I remember one time doing a personal training session, while I can think of a few different stories like this, but I had one client that just constantly was like, I tell her to do something she's like, I can't do that. Like she was like really incredulous about it.

Rachel Keele 53:04

And it got really annoying. And finally she came on session. And I was like, I don't know if you realize that you do this, but this is this is what you do. You're constantly doubting me, but also yourself. And in this workout, if you tell me one

time that you can't do something, you're gonna have to do like 50 burpees, I have this whole like penalty for her. And she went the whole workout without doing it. And at the end was like, I can't like there were so many times I wanted to say that and I had to stop myself.

Rachel Keele 53:34

And then the next session, she came back and was like, I had no idea how much I do this. In so many different areas of my life, it was it was a metaphor for her life. And I've had other situations where I'm like, Okay, we're gonna do this heavy lift, I want you to visualize it, you're going to step into it, tell yourself that you're going to do it, and give yourself the time to make it happen.

Rachel Keele 54:00

And the next week, she was like, I applied that in a different thing. Like, it was something really hard that I had to do, I had to write this paper didn't want to do it. And I just did the same thing. I visualized myself completing it, I told myself, I could do it and I did it.

Rachel Keele 54:18

And I'm like, This is what happens I mean, it's the same thing. Everything is connected. So we develop practices and in gyms or in our physical activities that are not just applicable there, like we can apply them to other areas of our lives for things that aren't related to physical activity at all. So yeah, I mean, if you can just go on and on about the benefits of exercise for sure.

Bill Gasiamis 54:45

And we will for a little longer. My my son so he often talks about jujitsu and how it's improved his sense of self and his ability to to overcome things and get through hard stuff and all that type of thing. And that's beautiful because he's doing that now. And if I had done something like that before in my life because I was not physical much.

Bill Gasiamis 55:10

If I had done that I would have had more ways to solve problems at work that were causing me grief that I thought were unsolvable. And most of that was that I didn't want to ask for help. I didn't want to be the guy who goes to somebody. And, I was telling myself appear, like, I'm dumb or stupid, or, you know, an intelligent or something, which I was just naive, because I've never done that

before, I'd never been somewhere and experienced that problem before.

Bill Gasiamis 55:38

How am I supposed to know how to solve that problem, when I've never had the opportunity to experience it before. And there had been other people that were great resources that I could have tapped into, that I didn't tap into who had been there. And that would have saved me years and years of trying to work it out myself. And I would have been closer to my goal quicker.

Bill Gasiamis 55:38

Except I thought, you know, I've got all the time in the world. And then at 37, I almost never had any more time in the world. And the regrets came in. It's like, Oh, my God, you wasted so much time, you idiot. And I actually really did waste time. It's not the same as when I started my podcast in 2015.

Bill Gasiamis 56:19

And because I was so unwell, I couldn't put out enough episodes to make it a thing. And I paused a few times, and I was afraid of what people might think of me and all that kind of stuff. And I was playing all patterns was very different, because I was recovering from a stroke and trying to be productive. Whereas back then I was avoiding being productive, thinking that what I'm doing is protecting myself from other people.

Bill Gasiamis 56:48

All I was doing was putting myself in a situation where I was missing out on learning new things that were going to benefit me my life, my work, whatever. And most of it was from the personal development side of it. And most of it also was because I didn't have enough contact with unique individuals from a whole bunch of backgrounds. Exercise in a group in a gym.

Bill Gasiamis 57:14

Yeah, they might be all gym junkies, or they might be all, you know, slight meatheads or whatever. But they are diverse. And from that diversity, I could have grown. But I insulated myself kept myself in a space where I only surrounded myself with the people who thought like me spoke like me acted like me did the work that I did. And it's like, what a boring bastard I am.

Bill Gasiamis 57:38

You know, and then it's like, that's what the podcast is, this is my gym, you know,

I come to the podcast to meet people who think or act differently than me. And go about life differently and have different expectations or ideas or whatever. But in the end, I grow from that. And then I can apply it to the next person who's unique and an individual that I've never met before. And I don't know about and I can just go so you think that, you're wearing a cone on your heads gonna help you with stroke recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 58:16

Alright, tell me about that. I'm not going to judge you. If you feel that way. You know, tell me about it. I might give you my opinion, if you asked for it, specifically, how it's going to support me to recover from stroke. I don't think it will. But if, if that's what you think, tell me why I want to know what's behind it. And that's it. And if you're not completely delusional, and if it's not a stroke talking or even if it is a stroke, I'm still going to talk to you.

Bill Gasiamis 58:41

It doesn't impact me one way or another, so it's like, exercise does that it also does that because even people who do solitary sports like running and cycling, who I've interviewed a bunch of ultramarathon runners and cyclists and all that kind of stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 58:59

Even those guys eventually, they'd like to run next to somebody or they'd like to pedal in a pack with somebody that appears like it's an individual sport. But when they stop at the local station for whatever pitstop they do, they'll talk bike stuff, they will talk about lifestyle, they'll talk about injuries and everything. And it's not an individual sport, after all, even tennis players, you know, it's not individual sport.

Rachel Keele 59:29

Yeah, the moment that they have a chance to talk about it with somebody like that's their buddy. And then also like, look at who they follow on social media. Like you develop your communities how you can so exactly, even with individual sports, there's community to be had for sure.

Bill Gasiamis 59:47

Yeah. I love it. But you also do other things now, with the people that come to train, you talk nutrition, so in an event that somebody comes to you and they've

had a stroke recently or they're recovering from stroke, they're a few years in? How do you tackle the conversation on nutrition?

Importance Of Nutrition And Exercise In Stroke Recovery



Bill Gasiamis 1:00:03

Because I know the majority of the people that I speak to who I've coached on stroke recovery, talked to me about nutrition, all say, I eat pretty healthy. And then if you ask them what they ate, there might be a difference between what their version of healthy is and what's really healthy. So what would you say? And what I like to do is sort of rather than tell people what they should eat, I prefer to tell them what they better avoid eating in my opinion. So how do you tackle that?

Rachel Keele 1:00:40

In general, I do the exact opposite thing. I'm trying to think if I've ever had conversation with people about eating like nutrition in terms of stroke recovery. Obviously, people talk about nutrition all the time, actually way more than exercise. But when it comes to like people I've connected with on social media who know that I'm a stroke survivor, usually they're talking about exercise, because I've posted a lot of stuff about that.

Rachel Keele 1:01:11

So in my general advice with nutrition is always about inclusion and abundance, and not so much restriction. So one thing that I'm really, really big on and this was actually something that I practice post-stroke, I felt the need to I was like, I

don't know exactly what I should be doing in terms of nutrition. I mean, I was taking a blood thinner. So they say avoid this, this and that, that are like natural blood thinners, you know, but I should get as much nutrients as possible, I think.

Rachel Keele 1:01:46

So we got a juicer. And we started juicing all the time. And it was fun, and I enjoyed doing it. And I don't do so much juicing now, but there's a thing you can look up the hashtag 800 gram challenge. And there's a lot of different people who do it. Now, I don't know if you've heard of it before. But it's basically eating 800 grams of fruits, vegetables, and legumes, like a combination of those things every day.

Rachel Keele 1:02:12

So plant foods that are low in calories, extremely nutrient dense, high in fiber, naturally anti-inflammatory, high volume foods, like because they're low calories, you would eat a lot of them and feel fuller when you eat them. And there's just so many benefits to eating them. That is kind of what I did after my stroke with all the juicing I don't think you have to juice but it's what I recommend to everyone for everything.

Rachel Keele 1:02:41

Whether they have like a health problem, or you know, they're recovering from something or they're trying to manage their weight or they're just trying to eat better. I think that's a great place to start because the idea is like, it's a lot for most people 800 grams could be like six cups, or like six fists like about six fist size of those types of things, fruits, vegetables, and legumes.

Rachel Keele 1:03:06

You can add it into just about any diet, but it's going to be a substantial change for most people. And it's going to provide so many benefits because yes, like those foods are naturally anti-inflammatory and they are packed with so many nutrients that they will fill you up and they will help you manage your weight. And beyond that nutrition is so highly individualized.

Rachel Keele 1:03:28

I don't like talking much about healthy eating because like you said, it can mean such different things to different people. And actually rightfully so because our body makeup like even our like enzymatic makeup like in our digestion is so

different person to person and our hormones are different person to person, how we respond to foods are different.

Rachel Keele 1:03:53

So there's going to be some things that would be very healthy for some people to consume and even some fruits and vegetables, right? That are great for so many people but some people might not feel great eating them. Like I'm someone who eats literally just about everything.

Rachel Keele 1:04:08

And with you know junk food and stuff, I just try to moderate it I try not to eat a lot of those things. But there's very little that I just restrict completely. So I tried to focus on getting a lot of good things as much as I can. And then that takes up place on my space. So like a lot of the processed foods. I just don't eat as much of those. I would say like yeah, focus on nutrients.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:35

I like that because I think you just summed that up really brilliantly at the end. It's like when you said 800 grams of nutrients if they're on your plate, well then the other stuff really can't get on because you're gonna be full anyway. And I like that idea. And I kind of sort of try and steer people away from sugar almost, especially if they have neurological fatigue almost any amount of sugar at the beginning.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:03

And then even later, because what enables you to do is kind of get baseline of sugar and get the sugar out of your body. And then when you have it later, say, a month or two or three months later, you actually get to feel what it does to you. And then you'll know whether or not it's good for you to consume. So that's kind of one of the things.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:23

And the other thing is any wheat-based or gluten-based breads, or pastures, that kind of stuff, because they spike blood sugar, but also, the gluten is inflammatory to the brain, and it's inflammatory to the thyroid and to the gut, it's inflammatory, right. So it's like, if you can keep those two things out, you're going to really create a good space for the other nutrients that you're putting on your plate to really do their work and help out and support.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:51

And then when you do go back and have them a little later, if you do have them later, than you notice how they impact you. And that's that's kind of how I did it. And I, I'll, I'll eat something sweet. Now, once in a blue moon, you know, we'll go and get a cake from the local coffee shop or whatever. And I'll eat it and I'll be able to feel the sugar coursing through my veins in all parts of my body, and I never had that experience before. I never felt that before. Until I realized how much it was impacting my fatigue and how much it was fatiguing me after the strokes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:29

And brain surgery, and then every once in a while have the sugar and it's like, people who are on drugs describe about how they feel. And I tell people and they look at me strange, it's like, you can feel that. I can probably feel it going through every orifice of my body in the blood. I don't know how it works, but I can feel it. So some of the insights are from paying attention, like you said, to what, how you feel when you're eating it, and then a little bit later and what food food does for you.

Rachel Keele 1:07:07

Yeah, I'm a big proponent of what I like to call thoughtful eating, I think a lot of people would refer to the same thing as intuitive eating. But for so many of us eating is not an intuitive practice. And so I like to encourage people just to be thoughtful. And what I mean by that is, before you eat, like just check in with yourself. Like, how do you feel? Are you wanting to eat something because you're stressed out? Or maybe thirsty? Or you actually want to eat something?

Rachel Keele 1:07:38

Like, give some thought to that? Well, you're eating, are you mindlessly eating? Or are you like, oh, actually, like, I think I'm satisfied. Now? I think I'm full now. And then after you eat? Yeah, like how did that make you feel? Like, in the hours after you eat? Do you feel any sensations that shouldn't be normal? That make you uncomfortable? Like how does your stomach feel? How does your brain feel? How does your blood sugar feel? Do you feel jittery? Do you feel calm? Do you feel sluggish? That kind of thing.

Rachel Keele 1:08:09

We're always just like, go go go. And so many of us are eating quickly and

whatever. So I'm a big proponent of just like, as much as possible, try to slow the process down and just give some thought to it. That doesn't mean that you I mean, you can journal and that's great to start out. But like, that doesn't mean that like, you know, a meal takes an hour and like you can't talk to anyone or anything because you're trying to check in with yourself.

Rachel Keele 1:08:33

No, just like, check in with yourself a few times and give yourself some space to be like, did that make me feel gross? Because yes, certain people will be very, very sensitive to some things and maybe not others and it may not be the same for everybody. So a lot of it is like a journey you have to take yourself and you may discover even healthy foods, you know, even certain fruits and vegetables might make you uncomfortable. And that's just part of being human.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:02

And for me it's legumes, you know, any makes me bloated, you know, so I avoid them. And that's the part it's like bloating, it's jittery, it's brain fog. It's also you know, the old thing that happens after holidays you know, when we eat and then we had a food coma. Those kind of experiences just pay attention. It might be the food. It might not be that you're tired. I love that well, what did you call it not mindful you called it?

Rachel Keele 1:09:36

Thoughtful I like to say it's thoughtful. Mindful is a good one but mindful gets used quite a bit. I like to emphasize like you're trying to think about it. Just think about it a little bit. Just be thoughtful.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:49

I like that. So let's talk a little bit about well, let me ask you, what is the hardest thing that you had to deal with regards to stroke, or overcome? And then I'll ask you another question.

The Hardest Times For Rachel Keele

Rachel Keele 1:10:09

Okay. The hardest thing I mean, physically the most painful and uncomfortable thing was the headaches for several weeks. And I still, I call them stroke headaches, I don't, I'm sure other people experienced this, I have a very specific

headache that never happened before. It is a inconsistent, stabbing headache that happens in the left temple, like the same side or whatever.

Rachel Keele 1:10:42

And if I'm dehydrated, or like overly stressed, like that will happen throughout the day. And it's very obvious, like, my husband will tease me about it sometimes. Because it like, contorts my face, it's only for a couple of seconds. Like I can't complain too much like, but it will just happen throughout the day where I'll be, it will just like, so that I mean, that's happened ever since those awful headaches that I had for several weeks.

Rachel Keele 1:11:10

Physically, like, that was probably the most painful thing. I mean, the biggest struggle was like, I think it was like the combination, like, of learning how to walk again, and then trying to find my way back into exercise and normal activities. And sometimes overdoing that. And sometimes, you know, going very slow and feeling very left behind, like, I don't CrossFit very regularly now, I still think it's a great methodology.

Rachel Keele 1:11:46

But in that in that environment at the time, like it's very competitive, and, and when you're progressing with people, and then all of a sudden, you're very much set back. Like that was really, really difficult. It was a very helpful experience, because as a fitness professional, now, people will write, you know, everyone's gonna have to, like have a surgery or get sick or something.

Rachel Keele 1:12:09

And so everyone deals with those feelings. And a lot of times they don't want to care for themselves or rest, you know, take the time that they need, because they don't want to fall behind you. Like they feel like they're on a good path. They're moving forward. And, and so now I can be like, look, just like I've been there. And I've been there for a long period of time, like, just rest and that will help you so much in the future.

Rachel Keele 1:12:35

That was very hard was this kind of being on that journey? I felt, you know, this is a lot of people who have experienced this will be like, it only took you a year. But I felt like for a year, I was kind of trying to like, figure this out, like, how much do I

do? How like, Can I can I do this thing? Can I not do this thing. And sometimes just feeling extremely frustrated sometimes arguing with my husband about stuff like that.

Rachel Keele 1:13:02

A lot of like, emotional baggage with it. A lot of tears at the gym, that kind of thing, like trying to do something that I hoped I could do and was not able to do. That kind of thing. I think just like that. Where the like emotions and the mental struggle and the physical demands kind of met, like that was probably the hardest part for me.

Rachel Keele 1:13:23

But at the same time, I am very, very proud to be like, yeah, I haven't learned how to walk again. Like I'm very proud about. That's like you know, not everyone has that experience. And people will look at the things that I do now and be like, Oh, you're so athletic. You're so fit. And I'm like, well, six years ago, I couldn't walk so you can do it too.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:48

Yeah. I love that thing that you mentioned the I'm going to call it the triangle of triumph. You mentioned mental, emotional and physical. All right, copywriting that, by the way, nobody ever use that. I just copied it. The triangle of triumph. And that's what it is. That's what I'll often referred to as the three pillars to stroke recovery. And there's a lot of little things in every one of those right.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:15

But you can't complete an A stroke recovery, if you don't do the physical part of it. And you can't complete a stroke recovery if you don't do the emotional part of it and deal with what it means to you that you had a stroke and what it means for your future and what it means for all those reasons you know that stroke impacts our emotions.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:42

And you can't complete your emotion your your stroke recovery if you don't deal with what it's doing in your head, not only the physical part of the head, but also that mental state that your head is in. It's a three pronged approach. You've got to do them both. And in the end part of the game gap that we spoke about earlier, is that they patch us up and send us home.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:05

But then they don't go, how do you feel about everything that's just happened? Let's get you through that. You've got to work that out yourself, and you got to go get counseling, when you got to do deep dives into your emotional discomfort, and people don't feel safe going there sometimes because it's hard.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:24

But going there is where the relief comes. If the monsters then you go to the monster, the monster is not really a monster, it's something we've imagined was a monster, and then it gets better, you know, and dealing with your thoughts and the types of thoughts that make it hard for people to go through a day or to wake up or to have to contemplate in their heads what it means that I can't walk right now.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:53

Is it forever? What is it? That three pronged approach is, I think what makes a really strong recovery, and you can put in emotional, you can add, you can add the religious experience in there for you, whatever that means a spiritual, whatever, you know, if you want to add that there, because I think that's where religion resides, it doesn't reside in the head, if you go to head for religion, you'll convince yourself out of it, because it doesn't make sense. It shouldn't ever be a thing because it doesn't compute.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:27

But if you go to the heart, and you experience it there it's better, so you can add to the emotional recovery, you can add your spiritual recovery, your religious recovery, whatever you want. And then the physical recovery includes the gut. It's where our instinct sign includes where we go to to take action from and where we move forward from and where we break through barriers from and where we have the guts to do things.

Bill Gasiamis 1:16:52

You know, and if you haven't got a healthy gut, and if you're not going there, you're missing on a key component to your recovery, like 1/3 of your recovery is not happening. And it could be the reason why you're wondering, why haven't I progressed forward in this aspect of my recovery, or in this part of my life.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:15

It's just might be that you're missing something. I love that you touched on that beautifully there. And I feel like this episode is going to really hit a lot of points for people that are going to make them think about things that they haven't contemplated before or thought about before. And that's kind of what I'm hoping to do. And why you guys helped me do that, because I can't do it on all on my own.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:45

I need you guys to help with that. So you're doing a great job there, you're also doing a great job in your life, and the way that you support and help people because you know what it's going to help them overcome what a gift or you know what it's going to help them avoid on a gift to be able to give somebody some tools and help them avoid some of the hard stuff that they don't need to experience so that they can avoid well worth avoiding. And maybe it'll soften the blow of something that they experienced in the future. So, on that note, the last question that I came up with earlier that I wanted to remember to ask you was what has stroke taught you that you didn't know before stroke?

What Stroke Tought Rachel Keele

Rachel Keele 1:18:33

Well, first of all, now I know what it is. What it means I know the of signs and symptoms. And I like to advertise those to people because I was so clueless about it. So and the very literal sense, I've learned that oh, man, like, I just feel kind of like a different person afterwards. So I'm trying to, like boil that down to I mean, I feel like we've kind of talked about some of that.

Rachel Keele 1:19:08

I certainly feel like I learned the value of even small gestures of support for other people, and how meaningful that can be one thing that I used to say, I feel like I wrote this for something was that what stroke gave me was a strength of spirit and a softness of heart. So you know, kind of like the idea that making me a more sensitive person, but also really just steeling me, like hardening me.

Rachel Keele 1:19:43

Just toughening me up to you know, whatever next difficult thing would happen, and that is life, like whether it's a physical challenge or it's a loss or it's some sort of intense emotional experience, like we're all going to experience trauma in our

life, we cannot get around that. And if you're a person of faith or not, or whoever you believe in, you have to reconcile the fact that very challenging things will happen in your life, whether you face them yet or not.

Rachel Keele 1:20:21

And so how are you going to face it when it happens? What are you going to do it that, and this experience has, I mean, it was probably the first huge challenge of my life, you know. And it just has kind of solidified in me that however difficult or hard something can be, it can still not that it in and of itself has to be a positive thing.

Rachel Keele 1:20:53

But it can bring about so many other positive things. And that could be just as simple as I learned x y and z from it. Right. So I feel like I have that experience. Like maybe I had heard that from people before. Or I could have, you know, I could have read that and acknowledged it. But I hadn't understood it in this way. That's probably the biggest thing for me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:18

Yeah. I love that. Well, thank you so much for being on the podcast. I really appreciate it. And I hope that people will reach out to you and connect with you. I'll share all of your socials on the show notes where people can go and download a copy of the transcript of the entire interview if they need it. And yeah, I look forward to following your path and your journey forward.

Rachel Keele 1:21:43

Yeah, and thank you so much for having me. And thank you for doing this. Like, it's just so important. And I wish you had been one of the people I discovered right away, but I'm really glad to know you, at least now.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:58

Better late than never.

Rachel Keele 1:22:00

Better late than never. Exactly.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:02

Thanks, Rachel.

Rachel Keele 1:22:04

Thank you.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:05

Thanks for joining us on today's episode to learn more about my guests, including their links to social media and other pages and to download a full transcript of the entire interview. Please go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes. If you'd like to support this podcast, the best way to do it is to leave a five star review on Google or wherever you listen to your podcasts on Spotify, on iTunes, wherever you listen to them.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:30

And if you're watching on YouTube, comment below the video like this episode, and to get notifications of future episodes, subscribe to the show. And of course, hit the notification bell. Sharing the show with family and friends on social media. We'll make it possible for people who may need this type of content to find it easier, and they may make a massive difference to someone that is on the road to recovery after their own experience with stroke. Thanks again for being here and listening. I really appreciate you and see you on the next episode.

Intro 1:22:58

Importantly, we present many podcasts designed to give you an insight and understanding into the experiences of other individuals. The opinions and treatment protocols discussed during any podcast are the individual's own experience and we do not necessarily share the same opinion nor do we recommend any treatment protocol discussed.

Intro 1:23:15

All content on this website at any linked blog, podcast or video material control this website or content is created and produced for informational purposes only and is largely based on the personal experience of Bill Gasiamis. The content is intended to complement your medical treatment and support healing. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice and should not be relied on as health advice.

Intro 1:23:38

The information is general and may not be suitable for your personal injuries, circumstances or health objectives. Do not use our content as a standalone

resource to diagnose treat, cure or prevent any disease for therapeutic purposes or as a substitute for the advice of a health professional.

Intro 1:23:53

Never delay seeking advice or disregard the advice of a medical professional your doctor or your rehabilitation program based on our content if you have any questions or concerns about your health or medical condition, please seek guidance from a doctor or other medical professional.

Intro 1:24:07

If you are experiencing a health emergency or think you might be, call 000 in Australia or your local emergency number immediately for emergency assistance all go to the nearest hospital emergency department. Medical information changes constantly. While we aim to provide current quality information in our content. We do not provide any guarantees and assume no legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, currency or completeness of the content.

Intro 1:24:30

If you choose to rely on any information within our content you do so solely at your own risk. We are careful with links we provide however third party links from our website are followed at your own risk and we are not responsible for any information you find there.