What Happens When The Worst Happens – Liam Bonar

Liam Bonar shares his journey of recovery after experiencing a hemorrhagic stroke at the age of 24 due to a cavernoma. In this inspiring episode, Liam emphasizes the importance of finding perspective when facing difficult situations and not worrying about things that are not helpful or useful.

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Liam Bonar 0:00
What happens when the worst happens? You know, and then the worst does happen, So actually, you just have to go on with it. I mean, that's another thing, there's no point worrying about that stuff. You know, there's just no point, it's not helpful. It's not useful. Yeah, put it in perspective.

Liam Bonar 0:20
And I've kind of mentioned a few times over the years to people, they always kind of look at me, and I've heard a few times on your podcast that people say in it, but the brain injury and I talk about it as an injury because that's the lens I've always going to try to look at it. It's the best thing that ever happened to me.

Intro 0:44
This is the Recovery after Stroke podcast. With Bill Gasiamis, helping you navigate recovery after stroke.

Introduction – Liam Bonar



Bill Gasiamis 0:56
Hello, and welcome once again to the Recovery After Stroke Podcast. This is episode 242. And my guest today is Liam Bonar, who experienced a hemorrhagic stroke due to a cavernoma when he was aged 24. Liam Bonar, welcome to the podcast.

Liam Bonar 1:14
Lovely to be with you. Thanks for having me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:18
Absolute pleasure. Can I just ask you, before we get stuck into the interview, I'd love to know what was it that made you reach out to be on the podcast.

Liam Bonar had a hemorrhagic Stroke

Liam Bonar 1:28
That's a really good question. So it's it's nine years almost to the day since I had my brain hemorrhage. And actually, I've been thinking about this quite a lot recently, because I've recently become a dad. So I'm 34 years old now. I was 25 when I had a brain hemorrhage.

Liam Bonar 1:51
And we're currently going through a bit of, I suppose research, and just finding out what the risks are for my son. So it's kind of brought everything back into really sharp focus, I suppose.

Bill Gasiamis 2:09
Interesting children do that. What was it like before children? Just yourself don't

have anyone to be concerned about or worried about? How did you go about life?

Liam Bonar 2:23
I think yeah, I mean, I think that's probably quite a good way to describe it. I mean, I was I was young when I had the stroke. You know, young and invincible, and you think that nothing's ever gonna affect you, I suppose. Certainly, you don't think about stroke or the risks of stroke.

Liam Bonar 2:45
So it kind of crept up on me, I suppose, out of nowhere. And I think just the journey that I suppose the recovery years and months and years afterward, it's really, it's been one of those things where I've learned to manage my symptoms and move on with them and make peace with them. I suppose and just live a happy and fulfilled life.

Liam Bonar 3:12
And that is my, I suppose my primary driver for coming on here really is, I mean, I don't have an agenda, certainly, but you know, if I can kind of share my story, and, you know, maybe help somebody less then, you know, job done. I think that's, that's all you can do.

Bill Gasiamis 3:33
That's a really big agenda. Believe it sounds like it's not an agenda. And I'm not saying that an agenda is a bad thing. What I'm saying is the amount of people that reach out to me and say, that podcast interview that person that thing it's just sharing of a story. And to me, the stories are also similar, there's not much of a difference, you know, something happened.

Bill Gasiamis 4:02
I had to overcome a lot of stuff, and I'm back to life, but it's not appropriate to break it down to just those things, something happened, and I had to overcome it. And then I went on with life. There is a lot of nuance in that story when you get to the other side, and then it remains nuanced because it's your specific journey.

Bill Gasiamis 4:27
The thing about it is your specific journey has a lot of things in it that other people benefit from learning about and hearing about. And that's the whole reason for the podcast. That's why there are 240 episodes and people are approaching me to be on the show, because they got a sense of what it was like to

accidentally discover it and then go, Oh my gosh, I'm not alone.

Bill Gasiamis 4:52
I'm not the only person that went through that. And then they felt the amazing gift of giving, and that gift of giving, is seems like it's about you seems like it's you're doing it for your benefit, which you are, which is great, but everyone else benefits as well. And that's the amazing thing.

Bill Gasiamis 5:12
That's why I asked because I want to encourage people to come to the show. After all, the gift of being on the show is one that you receive, but it's also one that you give to other people you're never going to meet and whose life you're going to change for the better.

Liam Bonar 5:27
Absolutely. I agree with all of that. And I think you've had, you know, firstly, you know, well done for doing what you're doing. And you've had some, you know, inspirational people on the show that there's been some great stories.

Liam Bonar 5:45
You know, one that I was listening to recently, Michael, you know, I kind of want to say to him as well, you're stuck at it, it gets better. And it's that kind of thing. You know, it's it's, you know, it can only help, you know, it can only be a good thing.

Liam Bonar 6:01
So, nine years down the line, you know, I think being able to take a step back and look at it, you know, holistically and objectively, you know, I agree, as you could reduce it down to, impact resolution, you know, if you look at it that way, and there will be absolutely similarities.

Liam Bonar 6:23
And, you know, I suppose, pretty much it's the same story, time and time again, you know, you have to make peace with it.

Bill Gasiamis 6:33
You have to mean it's not going to work otherwise, not only is our story, the same, but so is somebody who had a stroke, somebody who is the same, somebody who's had a heart attack, a cancer survivor, traffic injury, from a car collision or

something like that. All the stories are the same.

Bill Gasiamis 6:52
It's somebody goes through something, it tests you, you have to learn new skills, you have to adjust, you have to adapt, and then you have to move on. And it's relevant to everybody, this particular podcast, happens to be called Recovery After Stroke podcast, so that may say that I'm able to reach my specific viewers, listeners, and audience, that's the purpose of it.

Bill Gasiamis 7:18
I did call it something else before it was the recovery after stroke podcast, and it didn't quite resonate with anybody because it was so broad. And by the time I found my audience, you know, 20 or 30 episodes in, I started to feel like I wasn't doing the time that I was putting in any justice.

Bill Gasiamis 7:40
And I wasn't able to tell a specific person, hey, this podcast is for you. There's a whole bunch of people who want to listen to us and tell our story caregivers, healthcare professionals, stroke survivors, and all the different kinds of people who have been injured by stroke. And it's and that's the one that kind of started making people listen, respond, want to be on, etc.

Bill Gasiamis 8:09
So this is what I love about the fact that it's called the Recovery of Trek podcast. It's it's niched, to the point where, if you're a stroke survivor, and you hear about this podcast using it for you immediately. That being said, the lessons are universal. They are.

Liam Bonar 8:27
Yeah, that's fantastic. I think I think one of the major things for me, you know, and you'll be the same because I think your timeline is pretty similar. I think you're 10 years on, is that right?

Bill Gasiamis 8:39
Yeah.

Liam Bonar 8:41
So I mean, go back 10 years, and there wasn't anything like this. I mean, I remember distinctly remember, you know, looking around to the kind of waiting

rooms, and you know, there was nobody my age certainly that was a really kind of alienating experience actually, it was terrifying, you know.

Liam Bonar 9:05
And, you know, that's not to say that I'm unique because, you know, I'm I know I'm very aware that no, there's plenty of people, you know, in my shoes and have been in my shoes, but I think too, to kind of be the only person under the age of 50 say in when are in the national hospital or the hospital board, hyper acute stroke in UCLH in one day, you know, it kind of brings it home, you know.

The five foods to avoid after a stroke

Bill Gasiamis 9:37
just a quick break and we'll be right back to the interview. As a stroke survivor, I understand the difficulties of finding the right information about post-stroke nutrition. That's why I developed the course Five Foods to Avoid After Stroke. While most people are talking about what to eat after a stroke to support brain health and recovery, very few are talking about what you should avoid eating after a stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 10:01
If you want to support your brain to heal and are curious about the five foods that may make matters worse when you consume them, then you may benefit from this course. In the fun five-series of interviews, you'll hear about what foods not to eat after a stroke. But most importantly, why not?

Bill Gasiamis 10:19
From a qualified nutritionist Stacy Turner and performance coach Matthias Turner in the more than five hours of interviews, we discuss the five common foods that cause inflammation in the body and brain how they could interfere with healing, and how they may make fatigue worse, for just $49.

Bill Gasiamis 10:37
This five-part series of more than five hours of interviews with full PDF transcripts for download mp3 is for download, and videos will give you everything that you need to know about the five foods to avoid and why the modules include eight reasons to quit sugar after a stroke. seven reasons to quit caffeine after a stroke, eight reasons to quit gluten after a stroke, six reasons to quit dairy after a

stroke, and six reasons to quit alcohol after a stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 11:09
And probably that is one of the most important things that you have to and should quit after a stroke. If it's interfering with your recovery, visit recoveryafterstroke.com/courses. For this and other specifically designed short and easy-to-understand courses that are made by a stroke survivor for stroke survivors.

Bill Gasiamis 11:31
Once again, you'll get more than five hours of content, all audio is available to download in mp3 format for listening to the full transcript of all the content to take notes on or read instead of listening to presented by a stroke survivor four stroke survivors. also presented by a trained nutritionist and performance coach, you will also get 24 hours of access and lifetime access to courses purchased.

Bill Gasiamis 11:57
And you'll be able to interact with yours truly, in the comments section. Go to recoveryafterstroke.com/courses to check them out now. Yeah, and what happened to you is rare brain hemorrhages are rare. And you know what's even more rare people surviving them, that's even more rare. So tell me a little bit about what happened to you. How'd you get to be in the hospital?

Liam Bonar 12:23
So, like I said, I'm 34 years old now. So nine years ago would have been 25 massage the 60s before my 26th birthday. So I had just had a normal weekend, you know, with friends, I think we had a barbecue. Can uh went to bed didn't think too much of it, you know, had a couple of drinks, nothing, nothing excessive.

Liam Bonar 12:50
And all I remember that morning is waking up on the couch in the living room. And it was in the middle of summer scorching hot, not hot by Australian standards, but by London standards is there 34 degrees Celsius or something like that, that are

Bill Gasiamis 13:11
just getting started.

Liam Bonar 13:13

Yeah, exactly. But I distinctly remember lying on the couch and just being confused. And there'll be enough fly like a blue ball flying around the ceiling, and it kept appearing and disappearing. And then it would appear, you know, the other side of the room and then disappear. And it was just such a strange experience. But of course, I didn't realize that time because I was completely delirious.

Liam Bonar 13:41
I didn't realize at the time that I had central field visual loss. So I mean, I've been you know, almost entirely blind in the center of my second vision. So that was the first symptom, I suppose that kind of became apparent. I then don't know how he did this. But I then dragged myself into the work. Walked, you know, walked into work, which is, you know, the half-hour walk, and sat down at the computer screen.

Liam Bonar 14:12
And they couldn't log into the computer couldn't work. The mouse couldn't work, the keyboard couldn't you know, but because I was so confused, I still just couldn't make sense of, you know, you know, to me, it was just like, well, that's strange. You know, like, I can't log in and the person I was working with at the time was a really big design agency I was working so I was freelancing was kind of like our contract I suppose.

Liam Bonar 14:38
The person that I was that was responsible for me at the time kind of said you know Okay, thank you should maybe go home like you know, you don't look well kind of thing. And from there, you know when I've saved funds my mom because I just didn't know what to do. I was so confused perfectly. And exactly, and she said, you know, I think she suspected it was maybe having like a visual migraine or something like that.

Liam Bonar 15:08
And then really wisely kind of said, you know, why don't you go to the optician? So, to myself, the optician kind of looked into my eyes and said, Your eyes are absolutely fine. And this was kind of the moment where things started to fall into place. So he looked terrified, wrote 100 A letter sealed it put me in a taxi straight to the hospital.

Liam Bonar 15:39
I said, give this, you know, to the person on the desk, when you get in there spoke to the taxi driver met with the taxi driver kinda didn't want an ambulance to put me straight in a taxi, because it was one of those. So that was the Eye Hospital, which was close by so it was kind of an easy thing, but they are they are part of UCLH as well.

Liam Bonar 16:00
So which as you know, is probably the best place you could be arguably, for a brain hemorrhage and London to the UK. So, you know, from the point of handing that over, and the person, you know, opening it and reading, which must have been a strange experience for them. You know, I was quite quickly whisked off, to the night cricket sharpener, and then the rest is history.

The process of getting to the hospital

Bill Gasiamis 16:31
Yeah, it's really interesting to hear that your process to get to hospitals is quite rapid, that's awesome. Most people fluff around and take the time. And because you're having a stroke, you can't work out what the right thing to do is and you make all these excuses, and you justify everything. And this particular doctor has done an amazing job, when you've gotten there to get your eyes checked, they've gone.

Bill Gasiamis 17:04
It's it's not your eyes, therefore it must be in your illogical straight into a cab. And immediately to the hospital. So when you're in the hospital, you don't know what's happening yet you just know that it's pretty serious. This guy was concerned. So you're in hospital. And then they came back to you after a little while with the results with the news? How did they break it to you?

Liam Bonar 17:30
So I think it was pretty obvious for them, because, you know, they must have seen, you know, similar types of admission. I would imagine. I think the moment that it started to become obvious to me was when I was taken down for my second MRI because, at this point, they still thought it was bleeding. Taken down, I think it was like two o'clock in the morning or something by this point, you know, there

was nobody else about basically.

Liam Bonar 18:00
So it was me and me and a nurse. And she was gonna feel me down with the porter to be scanned, and she just burst into tears. She just looked at me and burst into tears. Fast forward, you know, so my wife. No. So I've not been married before my wife, my wife used to work in stroke units she's a nurse.

Liam Bonar 18:26
So she kind of said, well, listen, that only happens when they're convinced that you're going to die you know, they tend to know that know the trajectory of things. So, you know, it's one it's one of these situations that you know, other time, you know, you just think oh my god, you know, this must be serious.

Liam Bonar 18:46
But yeah, I mean, from there, you know, it was it was very much a case of, you know, scans, lots of MRIs that day. I think I had six MRIs or something when I was in there because from my understanding they just what to be sure that well, they damaged it correctly, but also that it wasn't still bleeding.

Liam Bonar 19:09
And, you know, thankfully, you know, at Cana sort itself out, I suppose, and stop bleeding. And yeah, I kind of see it as a bit of a miracle, because I think you know, it's one of these, you know, very lucky to work it survive it in the first place. also lucky to kind of feel nine years later, you know, be you know, have almost no symptoms or repercussion. So yeah, I'm so thankful and appreciative.

Bill Gasiamis 19:42
Fair enough. So while we were while you were chatting, I was. I just searched interest cerebral brain hemorrhage, which is what you've had on Google. I'm laughing because I'm nervous. I don't know why I'm nervous. Interest cerebral brain hemorrhages.

Bill Gasiamis 19:59
bleeding into the brain tissue is the second most common cause of stroke 50 to 30% of strokes in fact, and the most deadly blood vessels carry blood to the blood vessels carry blood to and from brain, arteries or veins can rupture either from abnormal pressure or abnormal development or trauma. Did you have either abnormal pressure, like blood pressure, abnormal development, like

maldeveloped blood vessels, or trauma?

Liam Bonar had a cavernoma

Liam Bonar 20:35
Yeah, so my condition, I suppose. So I didn't know this, but I was born with a cavernoma. So that's an odd clustering of veins, the way it's commonly described as the shape like a raspberry essentially veins that, you know, would otherwise be straight, you know, they kind of cluster together and it causes this weird lump, I suppose. It does end the word oma, which I believe everything else, oma is a tumor that's not cancerous.

Liam Bonar 21:15
They're not the were believed to grow, although, I believe that kind of the thinking on that, but possibly changed in that time. But yeah, you know, the story I was kind of told by the neurologist was, if you have a bleed via cavernoma, the longer that goes on, the less likely it is to happen.

Liam Bonar 21:41
So it gets less and less likely every year. So the first year is kind of the danger zone, I suppose once you're over that, it's less and less likely, less and less likely. So I was always quite, you know, that almost gave me kind of goals.

Liam Bonar 21:57
And, you know, something taken I look forward to it's like, well, you know, like, I'm still here, you know, during the recovery, and everything else is like, it can only get easier from here. And that was something I think that kind of took through, I suppose the whole your whole journey.

Bill Gasiamis 22:11
With the cavernoma to remove it, did they do brain surgery?

Liam Bonar 22:16
No, it was inoperable because it's it's so deep, right? kind of behind the optic nerve. So basically, when the bleed happened the blood settled on the optic nerve, which caused brain damage which then caused visual loss. So it was right in amongst a central part, I suppose.

Liam Bonar 22:43
So they said, you know, the only option to the only option here of intervention is gamma ray, which radiation, so focused rays of radiation. But they decided that that wouldn't be appropriate to kind of just see how that goes basically, and kind of just manage it from there.

Bill Gasiamis 23:09
How often do you go back for checkups? Or does that not happen anymore?

Liam Bonar 23:14
It doesn't happen anymore. It was set to monthly and then went to yearly. And then approximately three years ago, four years ago, maybe we decided my neurologist, and I kind of decided that, to leave the stress of it to just not do it again. And basically, I'll go back, I'll get in touch with them if you know, symptoms return or anything.

Liam Bonar 23:43
So it's kind of you know, it's kind of a bit of a thumbs up, I've taken that as a bit of a thumbs up to say, you know, go on and go on with your life. Now, you know, this doesn't have to have to wear you down. No, you know, you can you don't have to think about this, and it genuinely isn't something I think about every day.

Liam Bonar 24:03
No, you know, I still have the visual loss, albeit much, much, much reduced. You know, the thing I was told at the time was, you know, this seems like this will never go away, but your brain has an incredible ability to heal. And I just, I took it in but I just didn't believe it. You know, I just didn't think you know, you're not going to heal like I'm not Spider-Man or something and I'm not going to heal suddenly.

Liam Bonar 24:32
My vision again, you know, but your brain compensates, you know, the area that I can't see out of, you know, I I still when I go to the optician you know, they tell me I've got 2020 vision, you know, I can still drive a car, you know, I can do all these things. I can drive more bike, you know. Arguably that's more dangerous.

Liam Bonar 24:56
But yeah, it it's one of these things, you know, it's, you know the things You're told that the time, you know, actually what the mark and a true and I think, you

know, actually being able to see somebody that's come out the other end and say, you know that that was true, you know, your brain can heal and it can do amazing things that you just didn't think it was it was capable of doing. It's like On another note, it's amazing.

Bill Gasiamis 25:24
It is there's another thing that happens is, you know if people can heal emotionally. And then perhaps if you heal emotionally that might heal your mental state. And even if your physical state isn't, quote, unquote, normal, you can heal, deeply heal, where it truly matters, like in the heart, and the mind, you achieve a level of recovery, that's very different from what people talk about when they talk about recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 26:01
You know, you damage your toe, you go to the hospital, they stitch it up for you, or they tell you it's broken, or whatever they tell you. And they say it's six weeks, and in six weeks, you'll be fine. But it's such a minor thing in comparison to your entire body, you never give it a second thought you just trust them, you believe them, and you're weary of the corner of the couch next time, it's no big deal.

Bill Gasiamis 26:24
And you might even smash it again on the couch. If you're like me, and you don't learn from the first incident of smashing your foot on the cow on the couch. So it's like, Okay, that's pretty inconsequential. I can just copy that and move on. Strokes are not inconsequential. It makes you think about things you never thought about before you think about your mortality, you think about how that's going to impact other people.

Bill Gasiamis 26:50
You think about your life, you know, for me, My life flashed by me. And it was, oh my gosh, all I realized was that past me wasn't the best kind of guy. Now, you wouldn't know it by meeting me, you and I, we would have had the same conversation, I would have appeared the same. But my behavior was you'll what was it? How do I describe it? It was as a 37-year-old, I was behaving often like an 18-year-old.

Bill Gasiamis 27:21
So there was an immaturity that wasn't there, even though I was mature in years.

And what the strike did is say to me, Listen, you better sort this stuff out. Because if you're not here, you're going to be a bad example of how somebody at 37 should behave when things go wrong, or when things get tough or whatever.

Bill Gasiamis 27:44
So had, I had that opportunity to go well, I'm going to work on myself, and I'm going to heal a few things. So that with my children, especially, so that if I do finish up after, after this next few months, or whatever, at least what I've done is made some things right, and then I can move on. If you've

Intro 28:07
had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time it can be, you're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind. How long will it take to recover? Will I recover? What things should I avoid? In case I make matters worse, doctors will explain things.

Intro 28:25
But, if you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what questions to ask. If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation. Stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you it's called Seven Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Your Stroke.

Intro 28:50
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, but they'll also help you take a more active role in your recovery, head to the website now, recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide. It's free.

Bill Gasiamis 29:10
And then what that did inadvertently without me realizing was because I had a long time at home on my own. After all, I had, you know nearly three years of the journey before I got to brain surgery. I had a lot of time to do personal development work, to go inward to search to discover.

Bill Gasiamis 29:33
And what I found was that the healing that I was doing was emotional. It was healing traumas from the past minor or major it doesn't matter. It was healing them putting them to rest stopping me from dragging them forward. You know

with my brother. Believe it or not. I was 37 Behaving like we did when we were young kids hadn't realized that I was still playing this same role in my relationship with my brother that I did when I was a young kid.

Bill Gasiamis 30:04
And at 37. It's just not appropriate. There's no space for us to behave like pre-teenagers, or like teenagers, and not. And realizing that changing my behavior and healing that part of our relationship. And stopping being angry at him all the time for being himself helped me heal.

Bill Gasiamis 30:26
I think that continued through the next two or three years as I got to brain surgery. And then, by the time I got to brain surgery, the only thing I was dealing with was brain surgery. I let go of so much of the rubbish from the past, I just let it all go. And now I wasn't complicating my recovery with dealing with the coming together of my past, and my present serious stroke issues.

Bill Gasiamis 30:56
And my forthcoming surgery, I wasn't dealing with all those things together. And it made so much more space for just dealing with stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 31:06
So dealt with a stroke, woke up, couldn't walk, have to learn how to walk again, the only thing I was focusing on was learning how to walk again, learning how to use my left arm again, there was no need for me to be emotionally torn, and then behaving like that pre-teenage kid that didn't have any resources to support himself and just act it out. I stopped doing that. And now I was behaving like a real adult, right?

Bill Gasiamis 31:35
So the whole, the whole journey of healing, I didn't realize from regret, it came from regret that if I've fallen off the perch, these guys are going to think I was an idiot. And then, and then when I worked on resolving that stuff I healed and my stroke recovery wasn't what I didn't in my mind, it was a different thing than what it started as.

Bill Gasiamis 32:05
Yeah, there was a physical recovery. And even though I didn't get all my physical parts back, my left side is still numb, and I still have balance issues. The cold still

bothers me on the left side, way more than the right side. All these things that happened that I still live with. It's not emotionally traumatic anymore.

Bill Gasiamis 32:32
It doesn't traumatize me or re-traumatize me. So it just is it's just different. And therefore, life is less hard. Even though it's physically challenging. It's not hard.

Liam Bonar 32:49
Yeah, that resonates with me as well. I think it certainly brings everything into really sharp relief and sharp focus. For me, it gave me tremendous perspective. You know, I kind of know that there were a couple of things. So for me, I think the so I'm a designer, a graphic designer, that that's my, my job.

Liam Bonar 33:13
And I was almost obsessed with becoming the best graphic designer, you know, my job meant the world to me, and it still does, you know, I'm a business owner, and I run my studio. But it was unhealthy. You know, it was an unhealthy competition with myself, you know, I can I would come home, you know, I was working in really good studios, I was coming home late at night. And then I was doing jobs on the side.

Liam Bonar 33:43
You know, it was it was unhealthy. And I think there's a certain level of you, you've got to do what you've got to do to, you know, when when you're young and all that kind of stuff. But yeah, I think certainly having a hemorrhage, you know, it put all that stuff in perspective, and I kind of just took a step back, step back and thought, you know, what am I doing?

Liam Bonar 34:09
With my time, you know, you know, if you may not have that much time. And that question itself, you know, is a scary question to ask yourself, but yeah, I mean, do you want to be regarded as you know, the best you know, the best designer, but it's not the most important thing? It isn't. I'd rather be you know, a good son a good friend. No good dad, you know, that's the stuff that matters. That's the stuff that I think about, you know, now.

Bill Gasiamis 34:40
Being the best is such a myth, right, because it's not measurable. Firstly, you cannot measure who's the best at designing. It's such a silly thing to aspire to.

That being said when you're young and dumb like we were once were, well, you do the best you can with the resources you have available to you.

Bill Gasiamis 35:01
And when you're young and dumb, it's like, the only resource you have is why if I want to succeed in this industry, I need to be the best. So I'm gonna go after it, it's better than going, I've got to give you this one lamb, like, it's better than going, I'm going to be mediocre at work.

Bill Gasiamis 35:14
And we're going to turn up, I'm going to do a half-assed job, and then I'm going to blame the client for not paying me there is a there is a certain amount of brilliance in being 24. And going, I want to be the best designer, and then actually going after it, the skill in growing up and becoming wiser as you grow.

Bill Gasiamis 35:36
And you can be wise beyond your years or 24, if you're lucky enough to fall, to go into that path of wisdom is the skill to go, what else do I need to do to be the best designer? So does the best designer just draw the best pictures? Build the best websites, the best pamphlets? Or are they also thought the best drawer and also the best emotionally intelligent person the most emotionally?

Bill Gasiamis 36:04
Are they the most caring person are they you know, encouraging to, the people who work for them, we can broaden the definition of what the best designer is, and add all these other attributes that we can work on. And it's a great thing to aspire to. If it's more than just I want to draw the best pictures ever. You know, like, who cares? No one wants you to draw the best pictures ever.

Bill Gasiamis 36:34
When they're doing business with you, you know that the best pictures are just one part of the business deal. If you draw great pictures, but you're an idiot, then when you go to the meeting with the client, they're gonna go great pictures, but we don't want to deal with this guy.

What happens when the worst happens –

Liam Bonar

Liam Bonar 36:50
Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And I think that's, you know, that's one example of many kinds of ways. I suppose that I mean, you can describe it as maturity, I suppose, as something that, you know, is almost imposed on you, you know, as a result of trauma. There are lots of other other ways.

Liam Bonar 37:11
I mean, growing up, I mean, I, I suffered from health anxiety, you know, I always kind of as a kid, you know, it was kind of, like, weird gonna worry about, you know, what, if I get that, you know, a bit of heat, it's COVID, you know, but yeah, I mean, it was almost one of those things.

Liam Bonar 37:32
It's like, well, what happens when the worst happens, you know, and then the worst does happen, you know, so actually, you know, you just have to get on with it. So, I mean, that's another thing that, you know, there's no point in worrying about that stuff. You know, there's just no point, you know, it's not helpful. It's not useful.

Liam Bonar 37:51
Yeah, it put it in perspective. And I've kind of mentioned a few times over the years to people, you know, they always kind of look at me, and I've heard a few times on your podcast that people say in it, but you're the brain injury, and I talk about it as an injury, because that's how it that's the lens of what was going to try to look out for. It's the best thing that ever happened to me. Oh, really?

Bill Gasiamis 38:15
Wow. Huge time. And I love it. Guess what? Before you go further, I just finished the first draft of my book, my book is called The Unexpected Way the Stroke Became The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me. No slug, okay, the title might change. But that's what the working title is at the moment.

Bill Gasiamis 38:35
And it interviews 10 People who say the same thing. And we all have various ranges, of impact after a stroke. And we all have a different path to stroke. And we will come from a different part of the world. It's such a weird thing because I

said that on the podcast probably two or three years ago.

Bill Gasiamis 38:59
And I caught myself saying it and then I got really curious, what the hell did I just say? So what the hell did you just say? Tell me, how is stroke? The best thing that ever happened to you?

Liam Bonar 39:13
It's not something I would wish for someone, you know, to happen to. But I genuinely feel like I'm a better, more balanced, well-rounded person as a result. I think I'm healthier than I've ever been, ironically. Because I'm not aware of my health and limitations and things like that.

Liam Bonar 39:37
I think I'm happier. I just I just genuinely don't come up here. You know, I'm, I'm comfortable of, you know, I've got a happy fulfilled life. I've got a great partner. You know, I've got a beautiful son, you know, proud of my work, you know, I just I'm happy with my law I think is the In a bit kind of dumbed down way of talking about, I

Bill Gasiamis 40:02
suppose, tent. Yeah, I'm

Liam Bonar 40:05
contented and fulfilled. I think it's one of those things where I was always pushing for more, more and more, and more before. You know, I suppose you have to ask, you know, where to start kind of desire to become, you know, the best at something can come from, you know, that, you know, to try and achieve things and push and push and push.

Liam Bonar 40:27
And, you know, if you have to take a step back and look at what's in front of you now, what the time is normal. You know, it's beautiful. It's really good. So, so yeah, I think I think that's, that's probably the probably the biggest, the biggest thing for me,

Bill Gasiamis 40:43
I want to, I want to focus on this for a little bit longer. So it wasn't the best thing that ever happened to you when this all started. Okay. changed and shifted. Right.

So what would have been the worst thing that has ever happened to you when it started?

Liam Bonar 41:02
Yeah, yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 41:04
Okay. See, that's the interesting part that people don't get when I hear when I say that to stroke survivors who are not at that stage where we're at. Okay, they go, Well, no, hang on a sec strokes, the worst thing that ever happened to it, and I'm like, well, it was to me as well. I'm not saying that it was great.

Bill Gasiamis 41:22
On day one, it was shit on day one, there was shit, the second blade, it was terrible, the third blade. And it wasn't any good at bloody surgery either. But then it started to evolve and change as I did the healing work. As I did this growth work I did this deeper search for my purpose and my meaning.

Bill Gasiamis 41:48
All those things started to evolve and allow me to think at a higher, what's the word to think at a higher automated perspective, or to think at a place that 37-year-old Bill couldn't possibly do it, I had to get to 41 or 42 to get there. And then when I got there, and I had that realization, it's like, on reflection, comparing myself to who I was back then.

Bill Gasiamis 42:21
And seeing how far I've come. And none of this was how far I've come with surgery recovery, it was all about how far I've come as a person. This is the best thing that ever happened to me this thing triggered all these other amazing things to occur. And if I hadn't been through that, I might still be 48. And as dumb as I was when I was 37. And that'd be sad.

Liam Bonar 42:50
Yeah, you don't know what you don't know. I mean, it's as simple as that. And, and, you know, you talked about that as a trigger there. You know, I agree, you know, it kind of, it's almost like hitting the fast forward button on, you know, life, you just have to think about the big things, you know, and you do, and I'm sure you know, anybody that's had any kind of major trauma. And, you know, 10 years down the line nine years down the line will probably resonate. But

Bill Gasiamis 43:21
yeah, there are people there saying that heart attack was the best thing that happened to them that the cancer was that, you know, whatever was the best thing that ever happened, for sure. And often, it's not because the experience is good. It's because of the healing and the recovery. And the growth is amazing. It's a post-traumatic growth. Journey. That's what it is for me. Yeah.

Liam Bonar 43:47
Yeah. That's, that's a great way of summing that up. And I think, you know, you'd mentioned just a second ago about, you know, when it happened was the worst thing that happened. Yeah. And yeah, it was, definitely was.

Liam Bonar 44:01
And I think the, you know, just tapping into that, you know, the name of the podcast know that the actual recovery journey, you know, there was, there were good bits, there were bad bits, you know like it heads and there are things that I'm incredibly proud of myself with the way I handled certain things. And then there are other things that I got wrong, you know, I know I got wrong. And looking back.

Liam Bonar 44:24
So I mean, in some of the Gospels, the negative side of things was that I felt ashamed of myself. You know, I felt you know, I didn't I hid away. I didn't want people to see me, you know, I didn't want people to think that I was weak, you know, I don't want people to see me vulnerable.

Liam Bonar 44:46
And, you know, it's part of that, I suppose, is being a young guy, you know, like, most young guys probably would have an element of that. But I think as well it's, you know, the Can I didn't have a kind of network in London suppose that I could be vulnerable with.

Liam Bonar 45:08
And that's, that's, that's something that I think, you know, hadn't considered, you know, because you don't think about that when you're 25 years old, you know, what do I do if I become seriously ill here and, you know, I've got a family around me, you know, I've got lots of, you know, great colleagues and things like that.

Liam Bonar 45:28

But you know, it's not the same, you know, it's not the same. And I'm lucky that, you know, Scotland to the northeast of Scotland, where I'm from a small city called Lundeen, or it's only 500 miles away from London, so it's not, you know, you know, I'm not I wasn't in Sydney, you know, it's not, it's not a train, airplane journey, you know.

Liam Bonar 45:52
But I think that kind of thing of vulnerability and not wanting to be seen to be weakest last, something I look back on, and thank, you know, I wish I hadn't done, you know, I wish I had just been a bit more open to, you know, people can come and see me and things like that.

Liam Bonar 46:13
But then the flip side is, you know, that, you know, fast forward a couple of months, you know, that I'm going to look at myself and thinking, you know, I, you know, I've come to terms with this, you know, this, this is something that's happened.

Getting back to work after a stroke

Liam Bonar 46:29
And, you know, I got back to work as soon as I could, you know, be reduced level, I think that helped me tremendously. I mean, marks driver for me. And it still is, that, that just helps, you know, phenomenally, actually enable, slowly, slowly, slowly get better, you know, doing my job again, you know, day by day, making better progress.

Bill Gasiamis 46:58
The thing about that is this, a lot of employers don't give people the opportunity to go back to work to get back to work. They're doing such a disservice. Because a lot of people define themselves with the work that they do when you ask them. Yeah, look, I did too, when you ask people that question. Hi, how are you? What are you? The next question is what do you do? What's your name? And what do you do?

Bill Gasiamis 47:22
I mean, tell we all go about introducing ourselves, and then you kind of get a feel for the lay of the land of that conversation by what that person responds as I am a

graphic designer, and then Oh, that's interesting. Tell me about that. Oh, yeah. Well, I have a company and we'd have clients, and it's okay.

Bill Gasiamis 47:41
And that's how you identify because that's what you answer, you answer that question. That way. You don't say, you don't say I'm lame. You don't say I'm Liam, who is, you know, 24. In the future, I want to be a dad, and I want to be married, I have a great network of people around me, you just go straight into this, this is what I do.

Bill Gasiamis 48:03
So when you're not doing that, identity gets impacted, because you can't go and do that thing. And we and you haven't had enough time to adjust your identity because a stroke happens one day. And before that, you were this version of Liam, now you're that version of Liam, and there hasn't been enough time to adjust.

Bill Gasiamis 48:25
So people often feel the doom of, I'll never be able to do X, Y, and Zed. You know, fill in the blanks after that. The reality is, if you just haven't given yourself time, you can still be a designer the day after you've had the stroke. Just be a designer who has to heal and recover. Why don't you just be that one?

Bill Gasiamis 48:46
And but we're so short in wiping it in writing, we're so quick to just wipe ourselves off the face of the earth. Fully you Yeah, you know, give yourself a little bit of time, do the healing phase. Now. Now it's time to heal. And then once you've healed, use your designer skills, if you can never design ever again, to apply them to a new thing that you can do that you will be competent at and that people will want to pay for or want to support you in or whatever.

Bill Gasiamis 49:21
And it's just such a bizarre thing that we do now. I did it as well, right? But I'll never do that again. Because I never did. I've never described myself as Bill the painter anymore because we have a property maintenance company. I won't describe myself as I'm Bill. What do you do? I have a podcast. I'm a painter. I do this I do that I do. You know if you want to know what I do? That's a big conversation. I do so much.

Bill Gasiamis 49:49

But if you want to ask a better question, I'll answer that as well. It's the thing is, the person you meet also asks a lazy question. What's your name? What do you do? You No, I think we could all do better in those conversations.

Bill Gasiamis 50:03
But I, yeah, look, I, I appreciate you saying what you're saying because this is what's beautiful, you've done it at 24, you've started to evolve and have this real great awakening at 24, it's going to hold you in such good stead for the next 30 or 40 years. Because if you've come so far already, I can only imagine how amazing of a dad you're going to be husband, you're going to be a son, a colleague, that you're gonna be because you've had this journey.

Bill Gasiamis 50:38
And it's, there's nothing but gifts in it, it's shit to start with. But there's nothing but gifts if you just know where to look. And if you're, if you have faith, that there are gifts, whether you're religious or not, whether you believe in religious faith, or just faith, there are gifts there, you just have to give them time also to emerge, not to go after them, let them emerge, they kind of happen counter-intuitively to other things.

Bill Gasiamis 51:07
you want to be a great designer, well, you have to design more, you have to learn more you have to do what you want to be, you don't want to have a great lesson from stroke, you don't have to do anything, you just have to sit and let it emerge, and then embrace it when it comes.

Bill Gasiamis 51:21
And be comfortable with being the kind of person who deserves that kind of beautiful thing to happen after such a shift thing you've been through a short time. Now just let the lovely things emerge take them on and implement them in your life. And then be the example. I thought, you know, what I need to be as the example to my children, and the people around me how you behave when you're dealing with a life-threatening situation.

The importance of having a network to

support your recovery

Liam Bonar 51:51
Yeah, thank you for saying that. I mean, I think that's that that's, you know, humbling, and nice to hear as well. And I, yeah, I think it's one of these things that, yeah, you just, you kind of just have to roll with the punches a bit, don't, you know, you kind of just have to take, take it in your stride.

Liam Bonar 52:14
And I suppose, you know, going back to one of the first things I say it's, you know, kind of came on here about like agenda and things like that, you know, I suppose for me, you know, what I would hate to think, you know, if there's, you know, another kind of people in there, in their 20s and younger than 30s, and 40s, you know, your heart, whoever, you know, that kind of thing can do it, you know, I don't think I can get through this.

Liam Bonar 52:36
It is like, you just have to keep going, you know, you just have to keep pushing yourself, keep pushing forward, and you will gather you will,

Bill Gasiamis 52:46
you said something really interesting, which was your network, you didn't have a network around you in London, that was going to be conducive to supporting you the way that you needed after a stroke, and we're the perfect network for before a stroke, you can go to the pub with them, you can learn from them, you can be mentored by them.

Bill Gasiamis 53:06
You know, you could you could learn your craft around those people with that network. But then they're not the right network for stroke recovery, and nor should they be because they've never had a stroke, and we don't want them to have a bloody stroke, you know, yeah, but then that's where it's important.

Bill Gasiamis 53:24
You need to keep that network there so that you remain part of that. So that your identity is still able to be nurtured as a designer so that you can be a post-stroke designer.

Bill Gasiamis 53:36
And then also you need to expand your network and bring people in that are going to help you on the healing journey on the recovery journey, that they might be able to help you with things like meditation, yoga, all the woo-woo weird stuff that you thought that's not for me, I don't do that kind of stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 53:54
you know, they're the things that you need to start to embrace the things that you had a negative idea about that were possibly beneficial to you that as a 24-year-old, you're going I'm a bloke, we don't do that we go to the pub, and we drink our sorrows, you know, out of the out of existence, you know.

Bill Gasiamis 54:17
So it's like, a really important thing to get to the point where, where people realize that the current network that they have, may not be suitable for the healing journey.

Bill Gasiamis 54:29
And that doesn't mean you discard them. It just means you add more people in and you find time for other people that you wouldn't normally associate with that will get you to understand you that will understand and you will appreciate that they understand you this other beautiful network. They're great. We love them. They got us this far. Yeah, let's just expand. Yeah,

Liam Bonar 54:55
I and you know, like my friends from that time. You know, they're still my friends, you know, they, of course, they are, you know, and it's, it's not a, it's certainly not a criticism of anyone or anything, I think, you know, I would open that out to relationships as well, you know, my relationship at the time, you know, it kind of broke down afterward, like, you know, but it's one of these things, like, when you're young, like, how, how are you meant to navigate that?

Liam Bonar 55:26
You know, it's, it's a difficult thing, you know, so you need the right people at the right time, and things like that as well. So interestingly, the best asset I suppose I added to my network, because I got a dog was, that was an incredible, incredible thing to you to happen, you know, so So I got a puppy.

Liam Bonar 55:52

When I was a little bit further along the journey, and yeah, I mean, yeah, when you talk about, like, emotional support, and things like that, you know, we didn't get her an as a therapy dog necessarily, but, but Bloody hell, she became a therapy dog. was fantastic. You know, it was just a fantastic, fantastic thing to do. So

Bill Gasiamis 56:19
yeah, that's excellent. So tell me a little bit about where you're at now, then. So now, life's changing. Things are getting interesting. Where are you now?

Liam Bonar 56:32
So yeah, nine years on. Happy content, done, I don't have you know, too much in the way of, you know, the implication of the hemorrhage. So I get fatigue, you know, I still have fatigue, but still kind of sneaks up, sometimes I get, I get tired more quickly. And when I get tired, it's like, get hit by a bus, you know, it's one of those things, but, you know, I can still go for a run, you know, things like that I can easily do my work and everything else.

Liam Bonar 57:09
So, you know, it's not something even that's not a barrier. Now, you know, my eyesight has recovered, you know, to the point where I forget about it, you know, it's not, it's not an issue anymore. The memory loss and things like that, that. You know, being able to access memories, I suppose, is probably a better way of describing it.

Liam Bonar 57:34
It's no longer an issue. I've never had problems with short-term memory rent in the car, but it's more like the period around the stroke, and a couple of years before that, strangely, are still very fragmented. There are things I remember, and there are things that don't, but that's fine.

Liam Bonar 57:53
You know, that's, that's fine. So make new memories, things like that. So I still get my words jumbled up when I get tired. Afraid, hard sometimes to, you know, pick the right word, you know, the first thing that we think you'll be fine, just know that you know, when you get to this nine o'clock at night, you know, that's, that's when the word starts getting a bit lost. But yeah, I mean, aside from that, you know, no problem at all.

Bill Gasiamis 58:23
Yeah, that's very familiar, your, what you're experiencing with fatigue, and all those types of things are very familiar, I still have bouts of fatigue, but the majority of my day is good. And I know, I know when the fatigue coming, so I know to adjust and settle down and do less at that time.

Learning how to be more aware of your body

Bill Gasiamis 58:47
So that's good. I've learned how to be more aware of my body and what it's telling me to pay attention to it and then respond, which I have never done before. You know, I never did that. Even at 37. I never did that. So now I get to the point where I'm going, Okay, it's three o'clock in the afternoon and feeling pretty good.

Bill Gasiamis 59:11
Four o'clock, I'm starting to get a little bit fatigued, tired. And then by five or six o'clock, it doesn't matter what is on the to-do list. If I'm having one of those days, it doesn't get done. It just gets put to the side and it waits till tomorrow and forgets about it. And my memory serves me pretty well.

Bill Gasiamis 59:27
Sometimes I forget obvious things, or, you know, things that I had to do a couple of weeks ago, I forgot to get on a podcast that I had booked with somebody. Even though it was in my diary, even though I knew about it for weeks.

Bill Gasiamis 59:46
I went to bed the night before, didn't put my alarm on didn't think about the podcast, and instead of waking up at 6:30 in the morning, I think it was a UK person to be on Zoom with the UK person or completely forgot about them and Uh, all I did was apologize profusely, later on. And we booked it, you know, it's no big deal. So those things happen. How's family life? Tell me about your family life. Your young, growing family?

Liam Bonar 1:00:16
Yeah, couldn't be better. I mean, my partner is fantastic. Strangely, we shared a birthday. So it's kind of written in the stars type thing. Wow. Like funny. That is

very cool. Yeah. So yeah. So I mean, we're kind of going great Guns and Sons five months old. Nikko, kind of, you know, what more? Can you say?

Liam Bonar 1:00:46
You know, just, it's great. It's just really? I mean, these are the things that I worried about at the start, you know, will I be able to have kids? Will I be able to, you know, will I be old enough? You know, they will like, what grew up? You know, things like that? Yeah. Yeah, happy. Yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:11
One of the things about kids, he's always a young dad. So I first was 22. And my first son was born. He's 26 now. And four years later, my youngest was born. And, you know, talk about what strike did to you? Woke you? Well, I woke up another part of you that forced growth and development and all these things onto you.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:42
Well, that's, let me tell you, that's what exactly what I kid at 22 does. It just, it just says to pull your head out of your ass, and just go and work it out and find solutions to all these new problems that you now have?

Liam Bonar 1:02:00
Yeah, we don't have time for that. Just do it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:03
And I thought I had problems before my son was born. You know, I thought I had problems as a 1920 21-year-old, which is fair enough. And then, and then the shit hit the fan. And it was like, All right. Get going, man. So I got going, it's exactly what I did. The thing about it is I didn't realize that at some point, you can level off, you can take a step back. And that was what the stroke did. To me, it gave me that next lesson.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:34
It was alright, you've been going great guns now. From the age of 22 to 37, you haven't stopped for a minute to take a breath. You haven't, you haven't taken time off, you haven't gone on a trip overseas, you haven't done anything. And it could be all over for you. Now's the time to stop, take a breath reflect, see how far you've come, and do something different and change some things.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:02

So you know, that's, I've done it the other way around, compared to you you're doing I think whatever. It's just flipped over. You're you've done the Brain Injury early on, and you're doing the family things. And yeah, I reflect on my time, being a young dad and being at, at some points working three jobs, to try and cover everything right, make sure we were able to eat and nappies and all that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:33
And, the one thing I didn't do is I never got back, I never felt bad about the set situation that I had to go and do the three jobs, but I never felt What a shit thing this is, and look how bad it is. I always thought at some point, I'm going to get a job that earns more money per hour. So I don't have to do three low-paying jobs. One after the other or all day, every day, seven days a week.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:03
That kind of gave me that opportunity to start my own business and realize that if I go work for myself, I'll be able to earn more and therefore work fewer hours and then be home more often. This is basically what happened, you know, like, it was the first part of my life that it made me realize that life is not self-centered.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:28
It's not just about me. And that's it. And the challenge of kids raising kids was an amazing it was an amazing journey into kind of knowing how to navigate stroke because it was a similar shit show. Early on, and then it's like I had an example of how to overcome you know, financial adversity, how to overcome All the adversities that come with being a young dad and having your wife at home with a child and a mortgage, and a car lease and all that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:12
But what I love about your path to being a dad is you're doing it in your early 30s. And you've had all these times of growth and appreciation, and you had all these lessons that you're going to bring into the way you approach fatherhood and family life. And I just think it's a beautiful thing now that you get to have this perspective that few people have your data, as well, and you're a deep thinker. So you're thinking about it differently?

The importance of being present as a father

Liam Bonar 1:05:47
Yeah, I mean, I look at this in the same way, it's incredibly, incredibly important for me to be present, as adults, you know, as a father to be there.

Liam Bonar 1:06:02
You know, for my wife, as well, you know, there's foreign to me, you know, and I think, you know, post kind of post-COVID, as well, you know, that, you know, hybrid working and all that kind of stuff, I work from home, you know, I'm in my home office, you know, right now, the majority of my work is done from home, so I can go down the stairs, and I can spend that hour at lunchtime.

Liam Bonar 1:06:31
You know, with the two of them, you know, well, well, then partners on maternity leave, you know, it's important for me, and I really cherish those moments and everything else. And I think that perspective that we talked about, you know, what's important, and, you know, works dollars, and, is important to me, allows me to live, you know, and pay for things and everything else.

Liam Bonar 1:07:01
And I'm every bit as good a designer as I was before I just do it a much smarter way, you know, I use my time more efficiently. So that I can also be a good dad, hopefully, and things like that. So. So yeah, I'm excited. I'm excited for the future. And I'm excited for bottle brands, and you will the next 10 years, the next 10 years.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:29
Before you know it, it'll be 10. All right, it'll go like that. There's no doubt about it. And a 26 I miss my kids when they were young. Oh my gosh, do I miss them? And not only do I miss them? They fled the coop, they don't need me anymore. Well, they might not that's the thing. And I'm certainly not going to be the winner.

Bill Gasiamis 1:07:59
You're going to have kids, when are you going to get married kind of guy, right? And look into that. But oh my god, do I miss them, I miss them. Because they, I've done the job, I've made them independent, I've let them just go out and be

themselves and discover the world the way that they have to do it. And as proud of that as I am, there's a part of me that just goes oh my gosh, I wish I could just have them back for a little bit.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:30
You know, every so often the 26 they're bloody adults, you know, there's no chance they're going to, and we're going to have him back in that way. But the first 10 years for me, were a bit of a blur because of the amount of work that I was doing. And I missed out on some of that stuff that I think is important that I wish I had done.

Bill Gasiamis 1:08:53
What I don't wish I'd done differently I did the best I could, but I just did. But I didn't pay attention to how precious those 10 years are. And it's, you don't know what you don't know. Yeah. And then they go, then they go, and then you reflect on them. 26 years later, it takes a while to reflect on it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:09:15
You then reflect on it in the following 10 years. You reflect on it a little bit further down, usually when they move out of home and it's like okay, all right. My heart is just going huh? As I settled down we did all right, you know, we did the best we could they're still close to us, and they still love us. They just don't need us. That's why we made him independent. That's the whole plan.

Liam Bonar 1:09:40
But in a different way, you know, networks and the right thing at the right time. Different rule isn't it? It's a different dynamic and you know, like I'm the same with my parents like I'm close to my mom and dad now Well, oh, so I've been but you know, the relationships different as an adult, you know, and for them as grandparents and, and everything else. So it's interesting. So journey isn't it?

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:12
It's a lovely journey, the grandparents thing is, I found my parents kind of got a second wind in their late in the early 50s and 60s When the four grandchildren came along because my brother has two kids as well. And it's really interesting now to see my dad, you know, we used to winch to my dad and say to him, and I stopped, you know, we'll work out we'll get a taxi, or we don't need to be picked up from the airport at five in the morning or any of that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 1:10:45
But he's, but if he's not doing that for us, then he's not feeling like he's able to support his kids anymore. And therefore his grandkids, right? So I've come to terms with him being over, over supportive even at 81 Lady and doing all these things. And when he says that sometimes my parents and I are so blessed, right? How blessed Am I that my parents don't live too far away? So my mum says, You know what, I'm just gonna whip up a three-course meal for you.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:18
And it's like, do you want it? Do you want me to bring it over at six o'clock on the dot? Yeah. In the past, I would say to her, Listen, don't trouble yourself, it's too much trouble or whatever. Now I'm like, Shit, yeah, you cooked me a three-course meal, you bring it exactly at six o'clock, I'm gonna sit down on my ass, and I'm just going to eat it. And I'm going to love every minute of it. Thank you so much. It's a different way to experience them.

Bill Gasiamis 1:11:45
And rather than because they old and frail ish, or whatever, I'm not going to tell them not to do that. I don't care if it's hard, I don't care if it's difficult for her to stand up. I don't care if it's painful. What I care about is that she feels that she's useful that she's doing her bit that she has something to occupy her mind.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:07
And my dad can be a taxi driver for the rest of his life. If he wants to be he can drive until his 100 As long as you can drive properly. I'm more than happy to have him do a free Uber run with food at six o'clock and bring me my perfect three-course meal. It's great. Isn't it great? That that they can do that? Absolutely.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:31
There's no more I'm, I've stopped telling them don't do this. And don't do that rest and, you know, settle down and whatever. The only thing I tell my dad is don't get on Bloody ladders, for God's sake, do not climb ladders. That's the only thing I tell him. And he listens to at least that much. And you'll call me.

Bill Gasiamis 1:12:48
And we can get that sorted. But when it comes to all the chores, the gardening, all the stuff that's too hard for them to do my mum complains about that everyone complains about it. So I know why you're complaining. And it's not because you

have to do it. It's because you wish your body was able to cope better.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:08
You know, and it's a great thing for us as well. I complain about doing the hard things because I prefer my body to be able to cope with it more. But it doesn't stop me from doing them, I still do them. My left side goes numb, and then I can't feel other than my balance off. That's the price I pay every single day for waking up and going to work. But as if I'm not going to go to work.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:35
As if I'm not going to Yeah, because if I'm not going to push myself. And when somebody says to me, Hey, on Friday, when they call me at 6 pm on Friday, and it's at 630 We have to be somewhere that they've just decided to go to spur of the moment. I'm dropping absolutely everything and I'm going there. I don't give a shit what I you know, what I thought I was going to do the rest of the night.

Bill Gasiamis 1:13:59
If you're invited me out, and we're going out to have fun enjoy ourselves. And it's usually a quiet drink or, and I didn't drink anyway. But I just sort of hang around with people who drink. It's usually a quiet drink or music or a band or a cafe or whatever. I'm going I am tired. But that type of connection re-energizes me while I'm there.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:22
It gives me an emotional recharge. And the physical pain and suffering go away because I'm making this emotional connection. And I've been able to separate the difference between what they all want, and what each interaction with a human being gives me now. And then there's the person who would ring and say, Hey, do you want to go out and I know that person is just going to chew my ear off. Tell me about all the problems in the world all the issues.

Bill Gasiamis 1:14:53
And I'm not going I'm not going with that person. I don't want to have a draining conversation with that person because my energy as a stroke survivor is limited daily, and that person is just going to drain out of me the energy that I've gotten, I'm not up for that.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:09
You need to find somebody else to get rehabilitated from. I'm the kind to

rehabilitate you and listen to all your problems to know. Yeah, I've also learned that nuanced way now to interact with people that benefits all of us, not just me and them me separately and them separately.

How art is a development device

Liam Bonar 1:15:32
Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. It's kind of a development device, isn't it?

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:36
It is, it is. Because we can't just forever give and give and give, you've got to receive back you got to separate yourself. It's what we said about the community, the type of community, the appropriate community, you know, you have to enhance it and grow it and bring people in.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15:57
So your son is what's his name? Nico, Nico? And is he going to be a footballer? What's he going to do? Like, what's the what's the one thing that that's gonna make him kind of aspire to or be or follow his dreams and

Liam Bonar 1:16:19
whatever he wants, honestly, whatever. So I mean, I take him swimming. So he's five months old, I've taken him swimming since he was six weeks old, whatever week. So there's classes that you can do here that are, like supervised, and everything else, but it's only half an hour at a time.

Liam Bonar 1:16:38
But we go every week, sometimes twice a week at the minute, and he loves it. So if he wants to keep that up, that's great. If he wants to, if he wants to play football, he'll play football. I've spent four years in art school.

Liam Bonar 1:16:53
So I'd like him to at least have an interest in drawing and things like that, or some form of creativity, or something like that. But yeah, my thing is, I'll just expose them to as much stuff as I can. And then what sticks, sticks, and what doesn't, whatever. You'll find your way, I suppose.

Bill Gasiamis 1:17:19

Yeah. Tell me about the art, school, and creativity. What does that bring into your life other than your job? And how? And has that been helpful in your recovery? Because you're gonna hear about, and I'm probably going to more about this, but you hear about the creativity lights up one part of the brain and the other things light up the other part of the brain? And tell me about like, how did it help you with your recovery?

Liam Bonar 1:17:51
Yeah, I don't want to use a horrible analogy, I want to like paint a picture of, you know, me sitting in a room and painting my way out of a can a nasty situation, because there was nothing like that. But my job as a creative designer is essentially problem-solving.

Liam Bonar 1:18:12
So, you know, actually having to think about something deeply, really, really deeply understand that, to solve it. It's an analytical way of looking at the world, categorizing things, sorting out and making sense of it, and then projecting it back in our way that our understand also that people understand. That's my job is like a conduit between difficult information and helping people understand that.

Liam Bonar 1:18:43
So that was, that was kind of one thing. And a really practical sense. I kind of painstakingly and probably I wouldn't recommend doing this. But because of my visual loss. I, every week, once a week, had a wall chart. And I plotted where I could see American tea. And I did that over about 18 months.

Liam Bonar 1:19:12
And I documented it. And I put it into a file and I shared it with the hospital. And then at the time, he had said we've never seen anything like this, we've only seen from a medical sense, but what I would do is I would take the area I couldn't see and impose it on my face, for example, and say, when I'm looking at the face, this is what I see. I can't see the right-hand side of your face. If I look at the center of your nose, then I can't see your eye.

Liam Bonar 1:19:44
I can't see if you're smiling on that side or anything else, you know. And it was the first time that it made it because my symptoms were visual. That was the main thing. It made it obvious to people and understand what I was seeing and what I

was experiencing. So that was helpful, that was certainly helpful.

Liam Bonar 1:20:08
And then I suppose it just in terms of, you know, the day-to-day stuff, you know, we've talked about kind of problem-solving. And for me, the way I kind of looked at that was around, you know, kind of benchmarking progress. And you know, if I can get even just a little bit better at this law school in the right direction, and I know I'm going the right way.

Liam Bonar 1:20:30
And, you know, if I can, you know, stay awake and watch another episode of, or another game of football or whatever, you know, anything like, that's a silly analogy, but silly example, but you know, things like that, you know, and that, to me is like, well, this is the problem. And here's a couple of ways that, you know, we're working hard to solve it.

Liam Bonar 1:20:51
That's how I would kind of look at the perspective isn't it as a different way of looking at things that's that's the way that you know, design and design was talked about, it's like, you look at things differently. Most people look at things, designers are trained, or naturally, you know, we'll do that we'll look at it laterally, you'll try and draw an abstract from it'll try and, you know, bridge piles together, and everything else.

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:16
I love that. I love the application of your training in stroke recovery. And then to, to clearly describe to somebody how you feel with that image, or what you see is just, that's a game changer because now they completely totally understand exactly what your deficits are like.

Liam Bonar 1:21:41
Yeah, and I'm much better at visualizing something than verbalizing it. So for me, it's quicker and more accurate to just show you what I'm seeing than trying to describe it, and then some of the interpreters and

Bill Gasiamis 1:21:58
it takes the interpretation out of the out of the just creates a clearer picture of where exactly you're at. And then that person doesn't have to guess and imagine and, probably sometimes also, concoct reality in their head. That's not actual

reality, that's not real. And because they don't have the same ability to, apply what you're saying, to their particular for their particular needs.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:30
And maybe they're using also previous experiences from other stroke survivors, and superimposing their version of what happened to them onto you, and then it kind of has a bit of a disconnect, and it doesn't feel right for you and you don't feel understood, but this way, it's amazingly simple to help that person understand where you're at.

Bill Gasiamis 1:22:53
It reminds me of an episode that I did with Maggie Widom episode 47 episodes titled The Great Nail What? And Maggie had a problem describing explaining how her I think her left side felt, and she got Barbie dolls. And in one of the Barbie dolls in the series of these Barbie dolls, she got one of them and she wrapped it in clay on her left side, for example. And then she just described, that's what it feels like to be me right now.

Bill Gasiamis 1:23:29
So feels, imagine your body, half of it wrapped in clay, and you have to move that body through the world, you know, how would that be different? And then she got another one. And she painted it with different colors, etc. Then she had another one with I think pins and needles and that type of thing to describe the other feelings and other sensations that she was feeling.

Bill Gasiamis 1:23:56
And the visual image of when I saw those Barbie dolls for the first time, it was like, Oh, wow, I appreciate that. Because now I have a visual to explain something to somebody who doesn't understand how I feel. It's such an amazing gift. And she's a creative kind of person. She is in the theater.

Bill Gasiamis 1:24:26
She struggled early on getting through her recovery, her the impact of the stroke was pretty dramatic, in that she had real trouble on one side of her body, and also her mouth dripped on one side and it stayed drip and didn't change. And she was an actress and you know, she became challenged by all that stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 1:24:55
And then I interviewed her probably I reckon in 2016 Something like About 2017.

But since then, she's put together a documentary about her stroke recovery journey. And what they've, what she's had to overcome all the challenges, I was so blessed to be one of the first few people to have seen it to give her my feedback on it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:16
It was just amazing that she developed this. And she developed it with an amazing colleague and friend of hers, at the time when she was the most unwell. So she would have been struggling with every aspect of recovery. And in that time, somehow, she's managed to squeeze out a documentary. Now, I'm not sure if it's been bought, published, or shown yet or anything like that, I don't know what stage it's at, might check in with her.

Bill Gasiamis 1:25:48
But even though Maggie has been able to go back to the theater, she has been able to find a new community of people. One of the particular theaters that she's involved in is called Family PHAML. A, why I think family fits the family theater. And it's people who are somehow disabled, they might be in a wheelchair or whatever.

Bill Gasiamis 1:26:16
And they do productions and they run them, I'm pretty sure they're LA-based. So there's a whole huge, massive amount of shift and change. But she's used all those skills that she always had. And she's applied them in these unique and different ways. And she has been able to just bridge the gap between understanding stroke and not understanding stroke with these, you know, beautiful, amazing ways. That sounds a little bit like you're kind of thinking.

The importance of having a creative outlet in recovery

Liam Bonar 1:26:54
Yeah, I think I think for me, as well, it's always been great. Like, I've always benefited from having a creative outlet. And I think, you know, when, when you go into something like recovery, where time is the metric, I suppose that you can rely on you know, it's like, how long is this going to take to be able to draw and write as well.

Liam Bonar 1:27:20
I mean, like, I enjoy writing. I pain, you know, like photography as well, you know, to be able to do these things it's like, for a lot of people exercise. I mean, you know, like, I'm not running at the minute, but I do enjoy, things like that. But the thing that I the thing that silences my mind, and helps me relax is to create. So you can find solace and things like that. Definitely.

Bill Gasiamis 1:27:50
Brilliant, mate. I realize it's getting late over there where you are. I want to thank you for being on the podcast, and reaching out to be on the podcast. Great to hear your story and your journey. We should Well, best of luck with the little one. And thank you for being on the podcast.

Liam Bonar 1:28:09
Thanks so much. No, it's a pleasure. I enjoyed it.

Bill Gasiamis 1:28:25
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Bill Gasiamis 1:32:30
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