

# Young Stroke Survivor at 37 - Erica Wasser

Erica Wasser was 37 when she experienced a stroke. Now 18 months after stroke, Erica is well on the way to recovery.

Check out Erica on:

Facebook:

Instagram:

Highlights:

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Transcription:

Bill 0:00

What happened to you? How did that intimacy change for you because of what happened?

Erica Wasser 0:04

I just had to be patient and like I said, I had moved back in with my parents and I have a boyfriend and you know, he's not allowed to stay over. So I had to wait or he lives with his aging mother in the basement. So waited, and he finally was able to create a space for us. That was, it was and it was like, many many months.

Intro 0:35

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

Bill 0:44

Bill from recoveryafterstroke.com. This is Episode 79. And my guest today is Erica Wasser, Erica experienced a stroke at 37 and at the time of this recording is

about 18 months post-stroke. One of the challenges Erica is overcoming is that it takes some time to get to the answers to my questions.

Bill 1:04

The editing in this episode has removed most of those gaps. However, I've purposely left some in to demonstrate how much longer it takes for the brain to process things after a stroke. Listen out for the long gaps of silence from time to time.

Bill 1:20

Now since I started sharing with listeners of this podcast about the hundred \$49 offer for private coaching, with the recovery after stroke forum, I have had three listeners sign up for the seven-day free trial, and now they are receiving support to help them navigate their recovery after stroke.

Bill 1:39

That means that there are only seven places left at the annual amount of \$149 for unlimited private forum coaching before the price goes up to 199. So if you are a stroke survivor who wants to know how to heal your brain, overcome fatigue, and reduce anxiety, this may be for you. Realizing that the amount of support drastically declined once stroke patients leave the hospital motivated me to create a way to support stroke survivors so that no one has to do it as hard as my family did.

Bill 2:12

If you have fallen in the cracks between hospital and home care, and desire to gain momentum in your recovery, but do not know where to start, this is where I can help. I will coach you and help you gain clarity on where you are currently in your recovery journey.

Bill 2:27

I will help you create a picture of where you would like to be in your recovery 12 months from now, and I will coach you to overcome what's stopping you from getting there. During coaching, I will also teach you the 10 steps to brain health for stroke survivors and guide you through each step with supporting interviews from experts and information that is based on the latest scientific research.

Bill 2:50

Some of those steps include training on the type of mindset required for an

ongoing successful recovery and how to decrease the anxiety created by the thoughts of another stroke. There'll be a module on emotional intelligence which will help manage those out-of-control emotions.

Bill 3:08

Information about the gut and how a healthy gut is the first step to a healthy brain. We will cover nutrition and the kind of food required to reduce fatigue. And there will also be a module on how to improve sleep and much, much more.

Bill 3:23

If you're one of the next seven people to join recovery after stroke coaching, you will get a one-on-one private coaching thread with me access to the course 10 Steps to Brain Health for Stroke Survivors when released, access to member on the monthly group training calls and access to the stroke survivors private forum.

Bill 3:45

The next seven people to join will also get more than 70% of the full price of 599 and 12 months of access will only cost you \$149 per year. be one of the first 10 people to apply for Recovery After Stroke coaching now and get the first seven days free After the seven-day free trial, you will pay the annual amount of only 149.

Bill 4:09

And the price of renewal will never increase for as many years that you stay a member. Once the first 10 coaching packages are sold at that price, that price will never be offered again. So take advantage of the seven-day free trial now by clicking below if you're watching on YouTube, or going to recovery after stroke.com if you are listening online, and now it's on with the show.

Erica Wasser 4:32

Hello, Australia.

Bill 4:34

Hello

Erica Wasser 4:36

It's me Erica from the Jersey Shore, the jersey girl here.

Bill 4:41

How are you Erica and welcome to the podcast.

Erica Wasser 4:45

Thank you. pleased to be here.

Bill 4:47

Yeah, so good to have you here. Before I get into the questions and find out a little bit more about you tell me a little bit about what happened to you, Erica.

## What happened to Erica



Erica Wasser 4:56

Well, it was a cold, snowy day on March 7, 2018, I woke up with an extreme headache. I had gotten a new job and I called at work. I don't feel good. I texted my sister who was my roommate and said, Something's going on. Can you get me a drink from the kitchen downstairs?

Erica Wasser 5:21

I was on the third level of a condo and she never got the message on how I stumbled down to the first floor. I'm not quite sure how I did because I couldn't get out of bed. I get to the bathroom on time. And so I'm sitting on the kitchen floor and my sister comes downstairs it goes, What's this? What's happening?

Erica Wasser 5:39

She's getting coconut water and I said, I don't know Rach. I don't feel good. Something's not right. I have lower extremity weakness and severe headache. And she goes well, something's happening to your face. And I was like, What do

you mean what's happening to my face?

Erica Wasser 5:52

And then I started like, spitting out by the right side of my face and I'm like, Oh man. Oh Rach, think I'm having a stroke. She goes, Do you want me to call Mom? Our mom is a registered nurse. Said yeah, She FaceTime my mom, and my mom was assessing me and I said, Mom, I think I'm having a stroke She said, " I think you are too, Rachel call 911 now.

Erica Wasser 6:16

It was snowing that day. My sister's a dance teacher and the schools were closed down. So it was a miracle. And all the angels were helping me out that she was home in the first place. She calls 911. And they came to get me and said the symptoms were consistent with a stroke. They rushed me to the hospital.

Bill 6:37

How old were you?

Erica Wasser 6:39

38 my sister saved my life. My mother saved my life. My angels saved my life.

Bill 6:45

That's pretty cool. You went to hospital they admitted you and what did they discover about what caused the stroke?

Erica Wasser 6:52

They said there was a tear in the artery of my neck. I ended up having not a hemorrhagic but an ischemic stroke. So they went in and did emergency surgery, and removed the clot? And then 24 hours later I ended up back in surgery because during the surgery, I had a bleed.

Bill 7:12

It bled out of the blood. So when you woke up from surgery, what was different about you?

Erica Wasser 7:18

I don't know. It's kind of a blur. I don't remember. I think it was so traumatic that I blocked it out.

Bill 7:25

So I suppose then the question is what's different about you now, compared to yourself, like the years before the stroke with regards to physically and then emotionally and perhaps even cognitively,

Erica Wasser 7:40

Well physically, I have the most changes. I'm hemiplegic on my left side, my left arm is flaccid completely. I have some visual changes, but only in small print. So I just need a large print. My speech is unchanged. My memory impaired short-term long term is intact, I still have a positive attitude. And that sustained me through the entire time that I was in rehab.

Bill 8:10

Yeah, you have a positive attitude. I noticed that on your posts on Instagram. And then even though you kept forgetting our appointment for the Interview

Erica Wasser 8:21

Only happened the first time

Bill 8:25

This is the fourth attempt for this Interview.

Erica Wasser 8:28

I know but the second time we didn't have internet the third time. The microphone didn't have hearings. So this is the fourth time that I only forgot the first time.

Bill 8:43

It's the record. It is the record for the number of times I've had to reschedule an interview yeah that's not a bad record. And also your perseverance and your determination to just get it done strikes me as what it was that is helping you in your recovery your sheer determination and perseverance.

Bill 9:08

So, how about emotionally? How has it affected you emotionally? Is it something that you found has shifted in you? Because it enhanced something in you? What's the difference there?

Erica Wasser 9:21

Well, that's an interesting question because before the stroke, I had generalized

anxiety disorder, and I had insomnia, and the stroke completely changed me so that I was able to get to sleep. And I sleep, you know, between two and six hours every night.

Bill 9:39

That's fantastic. Isn't that an amazing outcome of a stroke?

Erica Wasser 9:43

Yeah, right.

Bill 9:44

Don't try that at home people. Any other listening, do not try that at home.

Erica Wasser 9:49

I went in and out of an emotional roller coaster between, you know, anxiety and depression several times throughout this experience. I'm in a little bit of depression now, but I'm pushing through every day.

Bill 10:01

Are you getting medicated for that depression?

Erica Wasser 10:03

I'm on an antidepressant for anxiety. stabilized by (inaudible) stabilized my anxiety and meditation I do daily.

Intro 10:14

If you've had a stroke, and during recovery, you'll know what is 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 recover? What things should I avoid?

Intro 10:29

In case I make matters worse, doctors will explain things. But, because 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 find yourself in that situation.

Intro 10:47

Stop worrying, and head to [recoveryafterstroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com), where you can download a guide that will help you. It's called seven questions to ask your doctor about your

stroke. These seven questions are the ones Bill wished he'd asked when he was recovering from a stroke. They'll not only help you better understand your condition, but they'll also help you take a more active role in your recovery, Head to the website now, [recoveryafterstroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com), and download the guide it's free.

Bill 11:26

How would you describe your feeling of being slightly depressed? Like what is that like for you to experience that physically? Is it physically a cognitively? How do you experience it?

Erica Wasser 11:38

It's hard to get going. It takes a lot of cognitive cheering on my side in my brain to get me to do things.

Bill 11:47

Is that because you're experiencing fatigue as well?

Erica Wasser 11:50

Some days I do, but most of the time I have a pretty good amount of energy. I'm a high-energy person I exercised a lot before the stroke.

Bill 11:59

How long did you spend in recovery? Do you have an idea of how long you spent in rehabilitation before you got home?

Erica Wasser 12:00

I did rehabilitation for a few months. Then I came home and then I went back to the hospital to get the other half of my skull placed back in.

Erica Wasser 12:19

And then I reached out to my doctor and asked him, am I a candidate for the Second Chance stroke program at this rehabilitation place? And he said, Yes, you are. I'm glad you reached out. I'll let the team know that you're coming back. So then I went back a second time and then I was only there for like four to six weeks or something. Yeah.

Bill 12:41

How come they had half of your skull off of your head?

Erica Wasser 12:45



Well, they needed to remove it to remove the clot

Bill 12:48

And then they left it off to support the brain when it was swelling or?

Erica Wasser 12:54

Well, it was swelling. Yeah, it was swollen. It's called a cranioplasty when they put it back on,

Bill 13:01

That's pretty cool.

Erica Wasser 13:02

I like that smile, Bill.

Bill 13:04

Thank you. I like your smile too. But that's pretty cool.

## **Benefits of smiling**



Erica Wasser 13:07

You know that smiling changes the neurotransmitters in your brain and increases your serotonin and dopamine mean, Just by smiling, your brain doesn't realize it can only detect the one emotion you can't be happy and sad and at the same time peaceful and happy and angry. I practice smiling every day just smiling.

Bill 13:29

You're a bit of a smiling person. I see. I noticed that and it is. It is, it's a great

lesson for people listening and watching about how really, if you're not very mobile, and you can just smile daily or find something to laugh at or find something to smile at, that you can have massive cognitive benefits by doing that.

Bill 13:52

And I remember many years ago when I used to see a counselor, a psychologist, she used to ask me, I think I was around 25 so it's a good 20 years ago, she used to ask me what movies I watch. And I would tell her to watch the, you know, the standard 25-year-old kind of action movies and they were getting killed and shot up and all that kind of stuff. If you're feeling sad or unwell, grab comedies and watch some movies that make you laugh.

Erica Wasser 14:20

But yeah, yeah, the violent ones aren't gonna change your brain chemistry too much. Comedy is where it's at. Right?

Bill 14:29

That's right they're not going to change your chemistry positively. That's for sure they might change it negatively.

Erica Wasser 14:34

Right, right.

Bill 14:35

It does go to show how much what you consume, whether you're consuming that in food or you're consuming that in TV or a Netflix series or wherever your information is, how that really can impact your life. So that's a great thing that you said there about how you try and smile.

Erica Wasser 14:55

Like that Charlie Chaplin song, Smile I would sing it for you but I was not able to sing since I had my stroke. I lost my singing ability. I used to sing in choir for many years like since high school. I can't sing on key. Like the biggest tragedy because my whole family's very musical.

Bill 15:18

Okay, so you've lost the ability to reach certain notes?

Erica Wasser 15:22

Sing on key at all. When I first tried to sing my boyfriend Happy Birthday, I forgot the words to have to birthday. It didn't matter because I just, you know, kind of spoke them and he got the message but then I practiced a couple of times. Now this year I can sing Happy Birthday and will not sing but say Happy Birthday. Isn't that funny?

Bill 15:45

That was there was almost singing.

Erica Wasser 15:47

You gotta find the humor and everything.

Bill 15:53

In Melbourne, Australia, where I live, I met some people who experienced a stroke a few years back and The two ladies somehow found each other they had both experienced a stroke. But their voices changed from an Australian accent to a European accent.

Erica Wasser 16:10

They lost their little what kind of European accent?

Bill 16:14

It kind of sounded like a bizarre bad French accent. And I thought that they were putting it on, but they weren't. And one of them had a slightly different version of a European accent. I don't know what it was.

Bill 16:28

But the accents seemed so bizarre. It seemed like they were putting it on. But they told me that it was because of the stroke. They lost their regular Australian accent and it just changed them and became something.

Erica Wasser 16:41

That's a shame. Because that's what kind of what connects them.

## **Things you miss after a stroke**



Bill 16:45

Something different. I hear so many strange things that people experience after a stroke. Tell me what are some of the things that you're missing out on at the moment that you hope to be able to get back.

Erica Wasser 16:56

I, as I said, was very active. before I was always exercising I was I used to do a triathlon, I trained for a mini sprint triathlon. So I was able to swim for a quarter mile on a new ocean bike for 15 miles and then run a mile and a half or two on the boardwalk.

Erica Wasser 17:28

I would go to Zumba classes, which are dance classes, and I used to love to dance I would be the first one on the dance floor the last one to leave and I missed that. So like all the active things that make me feel alive.

Erica Wasser 17:42

I used to go to music shows live music shows like I would start out being at the back of the theater and all of a sudden, you know, I ended up being like right in front of the band. It's like jumping up and down and being on stage by the end of the night. Like that's how into the music I am I haven't been able to see a live show.

Bill 18:03

So what's stopping you from getting there?

Erica Wasser 18:13

Well, I need someone to bring me there I need supervision a companion, my brain I don't have good judgment, and my parent I move back into the house, my parents, so they won't let me go unless I have somebody else with me and I need

somebody else to like to push me in the wheelchair. Although I don't need the wheelchair to move. Also, my bedtime is changed. I go to bed at 8:30 now and music doesn't start till like nine o'clock. And I'd be falling asleep as I was there.

Erica Wasser 18:56

Yeah, I have an infant bedtime I used to be out.

Bill 19:01

Sounds like you need and strong coffee just before 8 o'clock just to keep it going for a little bit longer, which I wouldn't recommend. But if it meant that you.

Erica Wasser 19:10

No that causes me anxiety, I can't drink coffee, even decaf I'm highly sensitive. Although I do have a bit of chocolate you had started to ask me I think you were going to ask me what I did for a living before I had a stroke. Is that right? I was a registered dietitian at a rehabilitation hospital, taking care of all my patients and I took care of many stroke patients ironically.

Erica Wasser 19:10

Now that I'm a patient and so when I knew that I needed rehab, I chose the place that I worked at previously because I worked there for over a decade and I knew all the people there I trusted them and I got to pick my doctors, medical doctor, and the rehab doctor so and I chose right because They took excellent care of me there like I said, I not only went there once. But I went there twice.

Bill 20:05

You went there twice. What was the second reason you went there?

Erica Wasser 20:08

Because I got the second half of my skull placed in my brain. And that improvement was supposed to improve my balance.

Bill 20:18

Have you had the opportunity to look back on any footage of yourself in your recovery? To see how far you've come? And what have you noticed? How much better are you now than you were, say six months ago?

Erica Wasser 20:30

So, my sister, she's 22 months younger than me. So about two years. She filmed

some things in the hospital and rehab and she put together this beautiful tribute to me when I hit a year. You see me come alive again. I mean, really.

Erica Wasser 20:52

In the beginning, I had, you know, half my head shaved because I had to get the surgery and I had a helmet on and I had breathing tubes down my throat and, you know, couldn't breathe without them. And then you see me being held up by the physical therapists in bags, I couldn't hold my body up, I couldn't sit up.

Erica Wasser 21:19

And then you know, a few minutes later you see me not only sitting up but transferring in and out of the bed into the wheelchair with a pair of sunglasses on. And I got to go outside for the very first time with my family and we're outside and it was great. You see me come alive to this beautiful music in the background and had, you know, words across the screen that she made up herself and said.

Erica Wasser 21:47

You know, when things unimaginable things and I'm paraphrasing here unimaginable things happen. Something inside of you doesn't change and that's your spirit and all these beautiful things and you are Magic and you are beautiful. You are strong and you're, you know you are light to be light, something like that anyway, so I watched it when she gave it to me at a year and then when I turned a year and a half, I watched it again and I saw myself come live but something that never left my face.

Erica Wasser 22:21

That was my smile. Was there the whole time you see the joy on my face when my little sister comes in and then my dad comes into the room and you see me kissing his? His face. He's got a beard and a mustache and I'm just kissing, kissing, kissing. And you see it when my mom brings me bubbles and I blow the bubbles and they're all over the like these like there are so many, reasons that I smiled.

Bill 22:54

Your smile. Did it alter a little bit? Did your face droop on one side?

Erica Wasser 22:58

Yeah, it was drooped on the left side for a long time. And then as time went on, you know, I smiled more and I was doing you know more swallowing exercises and facial exercises to get my face

Bill 23:18

To get your face back. Did you find Did you find that the singing skill of knowing how to sing how to use your face and how to use the muscles in your neck and your head? Did you find those skills are transferable to help you retrain your left side to move back into position and for your mouth to become better aligned?

Erica Wasser 23:46

No, but breathing helped me stay more calm, you know, breathing from the diaphragmatic breathing. Like when I got scared, it's time to be brave. It was like, you know, take deep breaths.

Bill 23:58

What kind of things scared you?

Erica Wasser 24:00

Surgery.

Bill 24:01

Fair enough.

Erica Wasser 24:02

Yeah, I've been getting blood very hard Stick them getting blood work and putting an IV in it

Bill 24:11

Become a human pin cushion when you're recovering from a stroke that, really wants to put holes in you as they can. It's necessary though. So I found myself just giving them my numb side. So my left side is affected as well. So when they would ask me which side did you want to draw the blood from? My left side because I feel the pain less on that side. And the needle doesn't hurt so much. So one benefit I suppose from being numb on one side, but I make the most of that.

Erica Wasser 24:44

Are you still numb?

Bill 24:45

Yeah. So I'm still numb on the entire left side. I have sensation but it's altered. It feels like I've set on my leg. And then you wake up and then you stand up and then you have a strange feeling. So the whole left side feels Like my arm and my

hand prefer to be clenched and prefer to be bent and towards my chest is kind of where my arm would like to be if I let it and if I get tired, I find that that's where my arm defaults to, that's where it goes to it kind of closes up a little bit.

Bill 25:20

So the numbness in my foot, makes my foot feel heavier. And when I place it on the ground, I don't. When I get tired, I don't get a response back from the sensation. And sometimes my brain doesn't know where my leg is on the ground and I get a little bit out of balance.

Bill 25:42

So I have some balance issues and sometimes I'll run into a doorframe or I'll run into a wall if the corridor is narrow. And when I rest up, it's usually much better in the morning, but it takes about 15 minutes for my brain to warm up, so to speak, to start paying attention to the left. So my first few steps in the morning, a little bit like a drunk person,

Erica Wasser 26:09

Yeah, I get it.

## **Missing Intimacy after a stroke**



Bill 26:11

When I came across your Instagram, you mentioned some of the things that you had been missing. And one of those things you mentioned was intimacy.

Erica Wasser 26:21



Yes, I was just about to say that just popped into my head.

Bill 26:27

How did that change? Is that something you're comfortable talking about?

Erica Wasser 26:30

Yeah, sure.

Bill 26:31

So it's a common issue. I would imagine for many stroke survivors. I was told that I would need to refrain from doing those things for a little while. Stop myself from going into a high blood pressure situation, because I had a bleed in the brain. But what happened to you? How did that intimacy change for you because of what happened?

Erica Wasser 26:59

I just had to be patient. And like I said, I had moved back in with my parents and I have a boyfriend. And you know, he's not allowed to stay over. So I had to wait, he lives with his aging mother in the basement. So I waited, and he finally was able to create a space for us.

Bill 27:22

That was appropriate.

Erica Wasser 27:25

And it was like, many, many months, like over a year, actually that I waited, and then we finally got our privacy.

Bill 27:34

Yeah, that's a great thing to get that back to get intimacy back. But I never considered that until just right now. I never considered that one of the reasons why intimacy becomes an issue for people after a stroke is because a lot of the time they have people with them. Well, they moved their family that just makes sense.

Bill 27:55

That's a bit awkward. I thankfully didn't have anyone else move into my house. My wife and I, kind of went well when the time came. I never considered that other people are in the house now and you need space from them as well. Find a

way to make time for your partner.

Erica Wasser 28:19

Right? And then you know, having half of my body not work. I was very worried that it would change things.

Bill 28:26

Would have a regular standard type of fear of what's my partner going to think and how they going to respond to my body.

Erica Wasser 28:33

So I just, you know, talked about it with him first communicated to him and he said, you know, we'll figure it out I waited for this song, like, okay, we started to get intimate and my legs were like a clam, they would not open it was very awkward. And we looked at each other and just started laughing like, Oh, you know what? Maybe we should have a stretch session first.

Erica Wasser 29:02

So we did we, you know, did the V stretching session and then it was fine. So it's a good thing we both have a good sense of humor, we just laugh. We figured it out was great.

Bill 29:18

That is amazing. That's so funny. But you can see how it can be so scary for some people and how some partners are not so understanding and some partners, might not want to go down that path with their, partner who's different or altered or changed.

Erica Wasser 29:39

But you know, there are other things in the relationship that are important that work with us. And there have been other relationships that have been like, there was never anything wrong with intimacy, but the other things, the fundamental things we're lacking.

Erica Wasser 29:56

So there was a high emphasis on sex and intimacy. And you know, it wasn't that important. Now that I see that I would rather have the other thing.

Bill 30:09

Yeah, you'd rather have a partner who is understanding, and willing to be patient. Willing to love you regardless of what's happened.

Erica Wasser 30:20

So I do feel that way now.

Bill 30:23

Yeah. And he's a good technical guy. I saw him sitting up your camera.

Erica Wasser 30:29

Yeah. Right. He's very high-tech. Rich, his name is Rich.

## What is in store for Erica



Bill 30:35

So tell me about what's in store for you in the future. What are your hopes and dreams? What are your plans? What are you thinking about moving forward and how you're going to move forward?

Erica Wasser 30:47

So there's a little bit of information about me that I haven't shared yet that also the stroke change, but for the good. I was suffering from very Dangerous eating disorders, many of them, and the stroke has changed I have a normal unhealthy relationship with food now which is good because I didn't have them before I had several of the eating disorders.

Erica Wasser 31:23

You name it, I had anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, all of them, I had them all. So I

have this idea that I want to go speak to high school students who are the teenagers who are going through, you know, the puberty, time change their bodies are changing and talk to them, and talk to them about the dangers of eating disorders and the things that go through your mind when you're a teenager.

Erica Wasser 31:57

And I want to share with them experiences that led me down that road and how you have to love and accept yourself for how you are and all the things that you're scared about, and you're hypercritical about are the things that make you special and unique and quirky.

Erica Wasser 32:15

So you're never going to be bored because of them. So, you know, it, just embrace them all. They make you different. And that's okay. There's something wrong with being different, you know, and just so I just have that idea that I want to do that and see if I can touch some of these young minds so that they don't waste any time like I did in my 20s and 30s.

Bill 32:39

That'd be a great message. And it's really important because.

## **What caused the stroke**

Erica Wasser 32:41

That caused the stroke. It wasn't anything else it was the night before my stroke, I had a relapse with my bulimia. And that's what I believe in my heart and soul caused the stroke so really only close family and my closest personal friends that are like family to me know that I've shared them with them one by one.

Erica Wasser 33:07

So being a, you know, just my whole story about being a registered dietician that has struggled through any disorder quit my job, because I couldn't talk about food all day long and trigger me all day.

Erica Wasser 33:23

And then I started working with the special needs population because my youngest sister Natalie has special needs chromosome abnormality and worked very well with that community because I didn't feel different around them. I didn't

feel stupid around them. I felt really intelligent. It worked well, but it didn't pay the bills so would stress me out but I miss that job. I miss all the relationships I had with my clients. I was very good at it.

Bill 33:52

I think it's important to talk about the difference. That difference is a good thing for people because when you think about the artists we all grow to love musicians etc. It's the reason why they become so prominent is because some of them are so different if you think about Lady Gaga, Madonna,

Erica Wasser 34:14

Yes, I know I'm such a fan of Lady Gaga,

Bill 34:18

George Michael, you know, just name any musician out there that has been around for a long time. It's because they're different. It's not because they're the same. We embrace difference when we see it on a stage we embrace difference when we see it elsewhere on the screen.

Bill 34:37

But what's interesting is that humans, tend to not embrace differences when somebody is living with a disability that's being created because of a neurological condition or because of stroke, or because of some other reason.

Bill 34:52

And we tend to give people with disabilities less fanfare than people who are different but able-bodied that can go on a stage, For example, I suppose difference is something that we need to celebrate. Then it's okay to be different. So I think it'll be a great message that you share that message.

Erica Wasser 35:09

I know nothing about public speaking, though. So I have to learn that art.

Bill 35:13

It's a performance. And you have to plan it and you have to know your words. Get through that process of knowing what you're going to say. And knowing how your story unfolds. Delivering that in a way that's going to move people then in a way that's going to make people think, and in a way that's going to get them to react.

Erica Wasser 35:32

So that's one idea that I have, and it's a pretty big one. It's just kind of figuring out transportation, but I decided if I just stay local, then I already have some transportation in my county, where I've linked up with them and I've taken it a couple of times to therapy and you know, it's relatively low cost a few dollars one way.

Bill 35:57

That is a great thing to be able to aim to do and achieve

Erica Wasser 36:00

Yeah, it's big though it seemed overwhelming to me.

Bill 36:04

It's probably some time away because you're still quite early in your recovery. You get better and better and you start feeling more normal and you start having more clarity, getting back more cognitive abilities as the swelling in your brain, inflammation decreases and as your connections start to occur, this yourself get a little better and better.

Bill 36:28

So that's why I asked earlier if you have footage of yourself in a recovery in the past. The interview will be great footage because to be able to see yourself a year from now, to be able to understand how far you have come in a year, and you'll be able to be where you're at today.

Erica Wasser 36:47

Sure, yeah because the neurosurgeon, I was talking to him or the neurologist, my biggest problem was that I was having neuropathy. Pain in the whole left side, especially in my foot. And, you know, trying all these different medications and herbs and everything. topical, you name it.

Erica Wasser 37:10

I've been trying acupuncture, everything. So we have the neurologist who said, The problem isn't in your foot it's in your brain, your brain needs at least a good two years to heal. It hasn't even been two years yet. March it'll be two years.

Bill 37:25

Some of the advice that I got early on was that for at least two years after a

stroke, somebody should not consume alcohol. And that was interesting to me. And basically when you understand what alcohol does well, how it inflames things.

Erica Wasser 37:42

It's a neurotoxin. Yeah.

Bill 37:44

So they give you that two-year window because that's kind of the general understanding of how long recovery, or healing of brain that has been opened up and has been prodded and poked and touched and what have you. It's not supposed to be accessed under normal circumstances.

Bill 38:04

So when excess, it takes a long time to feel normal again and to recover from that. So, with it with time, you'll get to be able to look back and understand that when I said I was at 95%, one-year post-stroke, I was nowhere near 95% better.

Bill 38:27

I was probably closer to 60%. And then I had that word. I had that number. For some reason. I kept saying I'm 95% better. And, in my mind, I thought I was but when I looked back, I realized that actually, I wasn't anywhere near 95%. I had fatigue, I had cognitive issues, but they got better. They heal a lot of the time for a lot of people.

Erica Wasser 38:50

Yeah, my doctor asked me what's the one thing you're going to do when you go home and I said, have a beer. I couldn't get a beer at the hospital.

Bill 39:00

Did you get one?

Erica Wasser 39:01

I did. I gave my dad a beer for his birthday. And he still had it in the garage. So he shared it with me. Yeah, I got that beer.

Bill 39:09

Why not one beer is okay? You've been through a tough time. If you give yourself the experience of having one beer then makes you feel your mood lift or it makes

you feel better for a small amount of time. Then why not?

Erica Wasser 39:27

And it wasn't even a full bear. I was like, a third of the. Yeah, but my boyfriend I like to go out and try different microbrews you know, it's just something I love. I love the dark beer and Guinness is my favorite. I know it's I like Guinness. stout. I love South and for like for real heavy.

Bill 39:51

You would fit in well in England or Scotland or somewhere

Erica Wasser 39:54

Right? In Ireland, I tried to give us the best guests. ever had in my life? It was room temperature.

Bill 40:02

Yeah, disgusting. Okay, from time to time, be right. Time is not gonna be right I'm right with detrimental but talking about people who drink regularly right? Not telling people right you sat on a great opportunity to catch up with friends or with family.

Erica Wasser 40:21

Right, that's right yeah sometimes although all my medication says to stay away from alcohol. Nope, not happening. I gotta feel no, I gotta feel my sense of normalcy.

Bill 40:33

That's important when so many things have changed and quote unquote No, not normal anymore. Things are very different from what was normal.

Erica Wasser 40:42

Right But as I shared with you the fact that I can eat normally and sleep normally are two huge things that changed my life the shift for the better because of the stroke so kind of grateful that way.

Bill 40:57

Gratitude is a big thing and if you can be grateful for something out of stroke. But that's a good thought to being grateful for other things later on. And gratitude is so underrated. And I know when you're going through a stroke, because life's



tough when you have a stroke and recovering from it, when you are hemiplegic and all that, you know, I get it.

Bill 41:18

But if you can be grateful for unexpected things, then that's amazing. And I had some unexpected that occurred to me. And one of those things for me was that because my brain was offline, my head was offline. I used to. I used to be considered like a headcases in the past. I'm no longer a head case. I know. I'm no longer an overthinker. I've connected to my body better. I discovered that I had emotions. I discovered that I had a heart, you know, discovered a whole bunch.

Erica Wasser 41:47

Like monkey brains.

Bill 41:49

Yeah, it went away, I wouldn't say that. I would not change anything. Absolutely. If I could avoid having a stroke. But the lessons, I would rather have the lessons without the stroke, but unfortunately for me, there was only one way to have those types of lessons. Came from a stroke,

Bill 42:11

So you've come a long way. I'm so grateful that you reached out and that you were willing to be on the podcast, I appreciate it. It's going to be a great episode, We're going to see somebody who's so early on in their recovery, that people are going to understand if they're further down the path of recovery, perhaps where they came from, and how much they've moved forward. And that's what it's all about. We're trying to create awareness and we're trying to create a show that people can come a long way and they can overcome some major drama.

Erica Wasser 42:46

Timeline. Yeah, interview me again, another year. We'll see how far I go.

Bill 42:53

Let's pop that in the calendar.

Erica Wasser 42:59

Yeah.

Bill 43:01

Erica, thank you so much for your time it was really lovely to know you for a little bit.

Intro 43:05

To discover how to support your recovery after the stroke go to [recoveryafterstroke.com](http://recoveryafterstroke.com)