

Your Stroke Questions Answered (Part 1) - Bill Gasiamis

Get your stroke question answered. The host of the recovery after stroke podcast answers questions from other stroke survivors about the ongoing challenges after a stroke.

Instagram

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Transcription:

Bill Gasiamis 0:00

When I'm fearful, that's usually in my head that's causing issues to stop me from trying something or doing something. And the reason is because my identity has been impacted. So I'll explain something to you, your identity resides in your gut, in your belly.

Bill Gasiamis 0:16

So when your belly has been impacted by stroke, that's right when your belly, your gut has been impacted by stroke, because remember, the head and the gut are connected, and you look back on your life and you go, I used to do this, and I used to do that.

Bill Gasiamis 0:32

And when you're comparing your new self, to your old self, what you're noticing is

that you can't identify with this new person, you haven't been living in this new version of you for long enough and you choose things to identify with that are related to how you used to do things in the past, so for you in the past, walking looked a certain way, and now walking looks a different way.

Intro 0:57

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

Bill Gasiamis 1:10

Hello, and welcome to episode 224 of the recovery after stroke podcast. To learn more about my guests, including links to their social media and other pages and to download a full transcript of the entire interview, please go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes.

Bill Gasiamis 1:28

If you would like to support this podcast, the best way to do it is to leave a five-star review and a few words about what the show means to you on iTunes, and Spotify. If you're watching on YouTube, comment below the video like the episode and to get notifications of future episodes, subscribe to the show and hit the notifications bell.

Bill Gasiamis 1:48

Now sharing the show with family and friends on social media will make it possible for people who may need this type of content to find it easier. And that may make a massive difference to someone on the road to recovery after stroke. In today's episode, I'll be answering your questions.

Bill Gasiamis 2:04

So the way that this came about I was I made a post on my Instagram page a few days ago, which went "Do you have stroke related questions that you would like my thoughts on?" And I had a lot of responses. And today I will answer some of those questions in the hopes of giving you an insight into another point of view for you to consider or not.

Stroke Questions Answered -

Psychological Rehab In A Stroke Survivors Recovery

Bill Gasiamis 2:25

So here goes, it's going to be unscripted. It's a little bit all over the place. It's different from my usual format. So hopefully you can come along and enjoy the conversation that I'm going to have with you. So the first question, and we're going to start off with a cracker we had amazing questions but this is an awesome one, because I've got a lot to say about this one was from my friend Greg AVM superhero who would like my thoughts on psychological rehab in a stroke survivors recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 2:57

Now, this is huge for me, because stroke recovery, in my opinion, is three-pronged and one of those things that get missed is the psychological. And another one of those things that gets missed is the emotional recovery. Now, a lot of stroke survivors, they actually do attend to the emotional and psychological recovery by going and doing after they've been released from physical rehabilitation, they go and do counseling, or they do some other work to try and get their emotional state sorted, or their psychological state sorted.

Bill Gasiamis 2:57

And if quite frankly, if you're not going to a counselor, after a stroke, I think you're missing a key part of your recovery. Now, clearly, the reason why there's so much emphasis put on the physical recovery is because just like the people who love you and see you and care for you, family and friends, etc. co workers, when they see you and they say, Hey, you look great.

Bill Gasiamis 4:17

And because you look well, they haven't been able to associate the seriousness of what's happened to you and how much you're struggling. They can't reconcile it, they can't deal with that because they can only judge you by the way you look. And they've never had a stroke experience before so they don't know what it's like to really have all those challenges in the brain and then the invisible disabilities that come with stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 4:45

Just like them, physical therapists, like occupational therapists also, unfortunately use the same filters many times to judge and diagnose whether or not you've made enough of a recovery to be sent home. And they're also then don't have the resources to take recovery to the next level.

Bill Gasiamis 4:45

So they don't have the resources to allocate to your emotional and your physical and your psychological recovery. So, when I'm talking about emotional and psychological and physical recovery, let me tell you what I'm talking about. So psychological recovery, okay, according to today's world, is happening here.

Bill Gasiamis 4:45

That's why we go to the shrink to the counselor, to the psychologist, to use our head to get through and reconcile some of the things that have happened to us, perhaps to change our way of thinking, to discover our thinking patterns and to overcome negative thinking patterns and to implement new ones perhaps, at least, for me, that's why I started going to counseling.

Bill Gasiamis 5:55

Pretty much when I was 25, almost 25 years ago, I went because I didn't like the way that I was thinking and the way that I was reconciling things that were happening around me. And I needed skills to uncover what was happening around me so that I can have a different way of looking at things so that I could work out whether I was the center of my problems, or whether everyone else was the center of my problems, well, works out that I was probably the center of my problems.

Bill Gasiamis 6:25

Now, I worked on my psychological processes and my psychological health. But there's a big thing that's missed in counseling and psychological therapy is the emotional part and that happens in your heart. Emotions are things that occur in your heart, and they are also part of your psychology and I'll explain why.

Bill Gasiamis 6:55

Because if you go back to the origins of the word psychology, the origin of the word psychology is very different from the definition that you get when you type in defined psychology, for example, on Google. So when you type in define psychology on Google, the answer that you get is the scientific study of the human

mind, and its functions, especially those affecting behavior in a given context.

Bill Gasiamis 7:25

And then there's many more, but the next one I'll mention is the mental characteristics or attitude of a person or a group. Now, I'm not sure how we got there. But have a listen to the complete difference of what psychology means today, and what the origins of the word psychology are.

Bill Gasiamis 7:47

So the word psychology was formed by combining the Greek word psych, which in Greek is pronounced psyche meaning breath, principle of life, life, or soul, or a combination of all of them, with Logia, which comes from the Greek word logos, which means speech, word, or reason.

Bill Gasiamis 8:24

Now, when we talk about in Greek when I have a conversation, because it's my background, when I have a conversation with somebody, and I'm referring to my logos, I'm talking about things that are coming from my head. So it's a conversation that I'm having with my head, but I am talking about my psychology, my psych.

Bill Gasiamis 8:53

So when I've been to counseling sessions before, and I've been in front of counselors, psychologists, coaches, who whomever they are, in the past, most of the conversation is happening from the head up. And we're missing that connection with the root cause of the problem.

Bill Gasiamis 9:18

And it's like going to the doctor and getting diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. And instead of trying to work out what the cause of the rheumatoid arthritis, inflammation in the knuckles are, what they do is they give you a medication to make the pain and suffering at the knuckles disappear and go away temporarily, so that you think you're okay you feel okay because the medication is doing its job and making your knuckles feel better.

Bill Gasiamis 9:51

But the actual root cause may be getting worse, because you may not be aware of what it is and you may be contributing to it more So, when you're going to a counselor talking about psychology, a psychologist or a psychiatrist, they are

using words to describe the profession, but their profession doesn't do exactly what it was intended to do.

Bill Gasiamis 10:20

When psychology became a thing with the philosophers of the ancient times, were talking about 2000 years ago, where they were discussing things. And using the term Psych and Logic to discuss things of the heart matters of the heart, they were doing that we are discussing matters of the head, we're using our overthinking head to overthink solutions.

Bill Gasiamis 10:54

And you cannot solve problems in the same format that you created those problems in the first place. I'm not saying that we created our stroke problems, the stroke created that. But the way that we comprehend how to go about our own recovery is definitely happening in the head for most people.

Emotional Recovery

Bill Gasiamis 11:15

And if you want to really know where recovery takes another level where it goes to the next level, it actually goes to the next level when you get into and connect with the heart. That's the kind of coaching that I do. My coaching is about getting people to connect to the heart.

Bill Gasiamis 11:36

Go where it's difficult to go because some people don't want to experience emotions, because it's hard, because it's painful, because it's difficult. But when you experience emotions, and you go there and you visit them, and you get curious about them, and you feel the pain, what happens is inevitably the pain goes away, your brain starts to stop thinking about all of the stuff that you've been overthinking.

Bill Gasiamis 12:04

Because it doesn't need to comprehend stuff of the heart, it cannot comprehend stuff of the heart, the brain's job is to come up with creative ways to support the hearts desires to achieve the heart outcomes. That's what it's for. It's not to come up with logical conclusions to things that it has no insight in, it has simply no insight, in the emotional part of the recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 12:36

You have to go to the heart, you have to do emotional counseling, not psychological counseling only. You can do psychological counseling, and learn new ways to think about your emotional problems, because that's going to be useful. But trying to solve emotional problems with the head is never going to happen, never, ever, ever.

Bill Gasiamis 13:00

So that's why I think a big gap in stroke recovery is the emotional recovery after stroke. If you're missing, that you're missing 1/3 of the recovery, if you're missing the emotional recovery, you're missing 1/3. The physical recovery I like that the people who support us OTS physical therapists, all the people who support us to get back on our feet, if we can.

Bill Gasiamis 13:31

I think that is good because it does give wins it gives people the opportunity to feel like they can get around that they can move, they can be somewhat independent, and that does cause a good impact on the logic on the logic on the psych on the thinking brain, it causes a good thing to happen on the thinking brain where the thinking brain can get the opportunity to go, Hey, I'm back on my feet, that's a win.

Bill Gasiamis 14:05

I'm going to feel good about that, or relief or whatever you want to feel about. Or I can move around in a wheelchair, I'm going to feel relief about that. I'm going to feel good about that. Or I can walk with a crutch or with a walking stick. Or even if I can't walk properly, I can still move somewhat and I can get to a destination even if it takes forever for ages, I think that's a win.

Bill Gasiamis 14:33

Even if it's hard. It's still a win because it's different from not being able to move at all. Even people with hemiplegia for example, who might not be able to get to be as freely moving as some of the other stroke survivors who haven't been left with hemiplegia.

Bill Gasiamis 14:52

Even those people who for example, find an amazing technological device, apparatus, wheelchair, electric bike, whatever it is to get moving even, that's

great for the psychology, but not the real psychology the one that we talk about these days, the psychology of the brain, okay, so it's really good for that.

Bill Gasiamis 15:15

But what is it doing really? Really what it's doing is effecting the emotional state. So if you pay attention to the psychology, when you have a win after stroke, and you have some relief, and you tune into your heart, and you connect to your heart, and you pay attention to it, you will notice there has also been a shift in your heart.

Bill Gasiamis 15:36

A lightness, some kind of a heaviness that's disappeared, some kind of more freedom in that space. So it's really interesting, when you have a physical win, that you've been supported to achieve by your occupational therapist or your physical therapist, it's really interesting to notice what happens in the heart.

Bill Gasiamis 16:00

And just to pay attention, bring your attention there, close your eyes, and just put your hand on your chest and just think about, wow, what is my heart having to say about the fact that I am now more mobile than I used to be, even if it's taken 12, 18 months, two years, whatever it is.

Bill Gasiamis 16:18

When you solve one of those problems, your heart has a lift. So when your heart has a lift, think about now how your head is feeling about that your head, you'll notice has had a different experience, as well, it might be more focused, less clouded, less painful up there, just on that particular one topic on that one topic.

Bill Gasiamis 16:46

So what people don't realize is that the head and the heart are connected, they are connected physically inside the body, and they are connected by your thoughts. If your thoughts are negative, they affect the heart negatively if your thoughts are positive. In the most difficult times, if you just have positive thoughts that you believe in, it affects the heart positively, when it's affecting the heart positively, it's affecting the head positively.

Bill Gasiamis 17:14

When those two are being impacted, in a beautiful circular loop positively between each other because they're supporting each other, the body gets

impacted positively. Your cortisol levels drop, which is your stress hormone that drops, your blood pressure drops, your anxiety levels drop.

Bill Gasiamis 17:34

All the things that make your muscle tone changes and becomes more relaxed and enables you to move more freely. Everything starts to work in a positive direction. So your body, your heart and your gut. And your head. Well, they've got to be connected, right? Because they're all in the same shell so one impacts the other.

Bill Gasiamis 17:58

Now, I hope that goes some way in answering the question that Greg asked, which was my thoughts on the psychological rehab in stroke survivors recovery. Psychology is huge. But let's reframe what psychology means. It means psȳché psych of the heart, logia logic, how you apply logic to healing the heart.

Bill Gasiamis 18:30

Do that. And you'll have a completely different experience when you go to your counselor. In fact, if you go to a counselor who says they're a psychologist, ask them if they can tell you what the meaning of the word psychology means. I'll bet you they won't.

Bill Gasiamis 18:46

I did that recently with my most current newest psychologist, and she had no idea and she was really surprised that the origins of the words, psychology were psȳché of the heart logic logia working at the logic of the heart, completely blown away. I loved that we had a great conversation about it.

Bill Gasiamis 19:08

And I'm a bit of a veteran when it comes to going to counseling. It's the best thing I've ever done. One of the best things I've ever done, and it started before I was a stroke survivor. So by the time I got to stroke recovery, I was a good seven years into my psychological counseling. And as a result of that I really took care of my psychological health. I wasn't on the backfoot I was really taking off my psychological health.

Bill Gasiamis 19:39

And I had a massive advantage on other stroke survivors if I was competing with them, which I'm not where my physical therapy, they had taken care of that for me, but I had all already taken this other step so I could support my own

emotional recovery.

Stroke Questions Answered - Recovery Doesn't Stop

Bill Gasiamis 20:00

Okay, so let's move on now. Recovery doesn't stop, someone made a comment, which was about recovery and the fact that it does stop, it doesn't really stop. I've been on this journey for nearly 10 years. And I'm continuously getting either in the way of my recovery or supporting my recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 20:26

And oftentimes, I am getting in the way of recovery, because I'm human. But when I am doing that, the important thing is to notice when you're getting in the way of your own recovery, when you're your own worst enemies, which we often are, and rectify that do something to be better, so that you're getting in the way of your recovery less.

Bill Gasiamis 20:45

And you're not the person that's causing all of your grief, pain and suffering, at least that way, if I'm not the person causing it, but my stroke has caused these things. Well, at least I didn't feel bad about myself, making matters worse. And that's all I've got to say about that.

Stroke Questions Answered - COVID And Stroke Recovery

Bill Gasiamis 21:03

Now, I had another question, which was around the effects of COVID. Many people talk about getting tired brain fog COVID, Making matters worse, or increasing brain fog. And I've heard a lot about that, I've heard a lot of people who have had COVID, who are not stroke survivors, who will then suffer from long COVID and have physical brain experiences that are different from what it was like before COVID.

Bill Gasiamis 21:38

So that their brain may be inflamed. And as a result of that, they are experiencing brain fog fatigue, or not being able to think clearly things like that. Brain fog is often caused, believe it or not, and started and starts in the gut. And it's one of those things where if you're going to the head to solve the problem of brain fog, what you're actually doing is the problem is in the brain, but you're filling it in the brain, in your eyes, in the way you're perceiving the world in the way you're experiencing the world.

Bill Gasiamis 21:48

But that's not the root cause of the problem. That's not where it started. So going there to try and solve it isn't going to fix it. The reality is, is that brain fog actually begins in the gut, it's a sign of an inflamed gut. And there's a lot of ways for you to support your brain health by decreasing inflammation in the gut. If you attend to your gut, and you go about decreasing inflammation there that benefit, the side effect or the positive effect, will be experienced both in your gut and also in your head.

Bill Gasiamis 23:09

Now, what are the things that decrease brain fog in the head, avoiding certain foods that are inflammatory, and it doesn't matter the cause of why your brain fog occurred in the beginning, the gut gets impacted by most things before anything else in the body. And it's secondary things that are happening in the head that have occurred or started in the gut.

Bill Gasiamis 23:40

And usually, it's been a long process to get to the point where you experience fatigue, because the gut has been doing all the work, it's been coping, it's been trying to get rid of all of the all of the toxins, all of the things that are going on there. It's been trying to work on that for a long time.

Bill Gasiamis 23:56

So by the time you get to brain fog and brain fatigue, the guts been under duress, under attack for a long time. So if you avoid certain things, so that again, you're not making matters worse, and you're not contributing to your own brain fog, you will be having a positive effect on your brain.

Bill Gasiamis 24:17

And if you're also doing that, you're going to be seeing a positive impact on your

joints. And you're going to be perhaps shedding some weight. And that will be a side effect of looking after the gut. So how do you look after the gut? I'm going to make this real simple because this is a massive conversation.

How To Heal The Gut

Bill Gasiamis 24:35

And it's not for this particular podcast episode. But how you heal the gut is you stop consuming sugar. And I'm talking about the stuff that's added in foods, the white stuff, the raw sugar, you stop consuming honey, you stop consuming anything that gets metabolized by the body in the same way and sugar gets metabolized and broken down the same way as honey, as sodas, as white bread, or brown bread or any kind of bread.

Bill Gasiamis 25:14

Anything that is wheat based or gluten based or something along those lines gets broken down in the same way. And that break down what it does is it spikes your insulin levels. And insulin in the blood is used to get rid of sugar out of the blood.

Bill Gasiamis 25:33

Sugar is highly toxic to the body. And that's why people who have high blood sugar high risk of serious health complications. So if you decrease the sugar levels in your blood, you're decreasing the inflammatory part of the sugar going around and impacting your blood vessels, your gut, all of your extremities.

Bill Gasiamis 25:58

And if you decrease grains, like wheat, and other gluten based grains, what's going to happen is you're going to decrease the amount of inflammatory response that your body has. Now while you're having a brain injury, what's happening is your brain is already under attack because of the stroke, it's already inflamed because it's been deprived of oxygen, or it's had a brain hemorrhage. And foods will either increase inflammation or decrease inflammation, the wrong foods are going to increase inflammation and grain is one of those things.

Intro 26:38

If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time it can be, you're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind. Like how long will it take to recover? Will I actually recover? What

things should I avoid? In case I make matters worse, and doctors will explain things.

Intro 26:57

But obviously, 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.

Intro 27:17

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, they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery, head to the website. Now, recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide. It's free.

Bill Gasiamis 27:40

Now, I am not going to do an amazing job of describing this because it's not my expertise. It's something that I know about and that I've done. And I have to put more time and effort into explaining it better. But if you want to know about how to get a better understanding of this, you need to go check out a book by an amazing guy.

Bill Gasiamis 28:04

The book is called Grain Brain. And it was written by Dr. David Perlmutter. And it was co-written or edited with Kristin Lohberg, David Perlmutter and Kristen Lohberg. The book is called Green brain. And it describes what grains, sugars and things like that do to the brain. So it's really important that, again, we get our own recovery.

Bill Gasiamis 28:34

So it doesn't matter why you're experiencing brain fog. It doesn't matter why you experience all that kind of stuff. I'll tell you something. If for one week, you just cut out grains, and sugar out of your diet and grains includes pasta, bread, any of the stuff that you buy that's prepackaged from a supermarket.

Bill Gasiamis 28:55

If you stop consuming sodas, stop putting sugar in your coffee, if you stop eating

sweets, if you stop doing that just for one week, you're going to notice a difference in the way that your gut feels, it'll feel flatter, you'll feel less inflamed and bloated, and you'll start to get some clarity around your head.

Bill Gasiamis 29:13

Now I'm not a nutritionist, and I probably haven't done an amazing job describing this. So don't take my nutritional advice, get somebody else who's an amazing nutritional coach or person to supply you with that information. But make sure it's that they are trained appropriately and they have the correct approach to recovery of the gut and the brain.

Bill Gasiamis 29:43

Because we don't want people to just tell you to take something to get rid of the symptoms. We want to deal with the root cause. So hopefully that goes into giving you some insight into my thinking about this. I think about things completely differently to a lot of people so hopefully This is gonna make you think a little differently.

Bill Gasiamis 30:03

So the book Grain Brain was a game changer, I found that in like, the first six months of my stroke recovery, and my fatigue went from debilitating to much, much better. And sometimes I make my fatigue worse by eating things and doing things that I shouldn't do, or I shouldn't eat.

Bill Gasiamis 30:24

But hey, I'm human. And sometimes I find myself in that situation because it's too fun to eat something that's weight based, like a doughnut, and have a coffee, when I'm around my friends or with my friends. So think about that. Now, the next question, I love these questions, by the way.

Stroke Questions Answered - How To Keep The Motivation Going?

Bill Gasiamis 30:46

I was asked, How do I keep most of the motivation going year after year? So I don't. And I'm assuming that question is related to the motivation for potentially, you know, doing the things that I do, recovering the way that I'm going about

recovery, doing the work that I do, getting on with life, even though it can be tough some days where my left side is really hurting me.

Bill Gasiamis 31:17

When I haven't slept well, when I haven't eaten well, I'm not really motivated, to be honest with you, I don't have motivation. I do things regardless if I'm motivated or not. And the thing is, because the work that I'm doing is too important to not do.

Bill Gasiamis 31:34

So even when I'm not motivated, even when I feel sick. If you sometimes go back to the other 220 episodes, there'll be some where I'm really sick and unwell, nasally congested, and feeling terrible. But if I've booked an interview, I find it really difficult to cancel the booking because it takes such a lot of effort.

Bill Gasiamis 31:56

And I appreciate the effort that stroke survivors put in to get to an interview. So when they do, I really don't want to be getting in the way of missing out on that particular interview. So I do it regardless of how I feel and motivation does not even come into it.

Bill Gasiamis 32:17

I found my passion. So at the moment, I'm working from a hotel room, you can't see it in the background, because I'm using the zoom filter, I'm away, we went to a family wedding. And I'm doing this recording from the hotel room because I've been busy, and busy not being at work, busy not being at home, busy catching up with family and friends and doing things that I love.

Bill Gasiamis 32:54

So I went about spending as much time away as possible in this particular break, and the excuse was going catching up with family and friends. And let's see if we can extend that a little bit. So that's what we did. But the whole time, I'm thinking about podcast interviews that I haven't done. And I'm thinking about stroke survivors that need support and need help.

Bill Gasiamis 33:20

And all I really needed to do in this break, which has been about two and a half to three weeks. All I really needed to do was find an hour to record this particular episode. And then before that, all I needed to do was asked a question on my

Instagram. And by the way, if you're listening to this, and you want to follow me on Instagram, Instagram, just the tag, the Instagram page is at recovery after stroke, no spaces all together, all lowercase.

Bill Gasiamis 33:50

So it's inconvenient to record now because I had to get my wife to leave the hotel and go out and about without me and be with everybody else without me and I had to do it on my own. So it's inconvenient. I had to carry my laptop with me. I had to edit this and upload it and get the person that supports me to get these podcasts up and running every week. When my mate Lance hey Lance, thanks for doing the stuff that you do. I had to get this ready and get it up to Lance so he can edit it and get it out to you guys by Monday.

Bill Gasiamis 34:35

So man I could easily be unmotivated because it's so much effort and but I want to be doing this on what I call my holidays and on my leave. So it's my passion. That's what it is. I'm passionate, I have another purpose for my struggle for my stroke for the three or four years of pain and suffering before my brain surgery, for the suffering that I experienced after the brain surgery, for the pain, for the discomfort, for the loss of income for the not being able to drive, the not being able to work, I have another purpose for it. And the purpose for it is not about me, it did start off selfishly about me.

Bill Gasiamis 35:21

But the purpose is about other people, it's to help other people. And you don't have to help other people like I've chosen to do, your motivation might be to just go down to the local Rotary Club in Australia, we have a club called the Rotary Club people get together. And they support community projects, you might have something similar to you at home, you might have a book club at your local library, you might have a stroke group that you catch up with online, you might do anything that brings your heart alive.

Bill Gasiamis 35:54

We spoke about the heart earlier talk about emotional recovery. That's how you help heal the heart, you do things for other people, you support them. And then that just creates the motivation, you don't have to actually become motivated, you just actually take action because you get so much out of doing things of the heart things that you love. So this is something I never experienced before stroke, a

podcast, connecting with people all around the world, 5000 downloads of my podcast, every month.

Bill Gasiamis 36:28

People coming to my website and downloading the PDF, the 7 questions to ask your doctor about your stroke, I never had any of that stuff before stroke. And it's really great to have it available. Most of it's for free. But if people want to pay, they can pay. If they don't want to pay, all they have to do is listen to my podcast, and I'm contributing in a positive way to a community that I'm part of that I never wanted to be part of, that I never would have chosen to be part of, but I found myself being part of.

Bill Gasiamis 37:01

So now I'm just working on doing work and supporting other people. Because as I support other people, that supports me, that makes my psychology, my head feel better about itself, less concerned about all of the things that I'm going through, it lifts my heart and it makes my head feel lighter and less cluttered.

Bill Gasiamis 37:29

It's full of oh my God, you got stuff to do. But it's not full of crap. It's not full of shit that's bugging me that's messing with me that I'm looping in and out, in and out in and out, that's messing with my head, I don't have those types of thought loops, my thoughts begin and end. And that's because I'm actually doing things of the heart. I'm using my head to take action on my heart's desires.

Stroke Questions Answered - Will I Ever Gain More Mobility?

Bill Gasiamis 37:54

I'm finding creative ways to implement what my heart wants out of my life. That's what the head's job is. And that's why I don't need to be motivated. It just happens. So hopefully that gives you an insight into that particular question. Now, I've also had a question which goes, it's been four years now from a stroke. I have gained some mobility, I go to occupational therapy and physical therapy in the last year I see little to no improvement. How come?

Bill Gasiamis 38:24

Will I ever gain any more mobility? That's a question I can't answer the last part will I gain any more mobility. But the fact that you can't see improvement means that you're only looking at one place, it means that you're looking in the mirror, for example.

Bill Gasiamis 38:42

And things look the same as they did 12 months ago, externally, they look the same, but you're not paying attention more deeply. And you might be using your head to create problems about the fact that you're not seeing with your eyeballs any difference. And you might be judging your success by whether your hand moves or doesn't move in a particular direction that you do or do not want it to do.

Bill Gasiamis 39:15

If you didn't have such specific goals that were about my hand must do this by this time for me to feel successful and feel good about myself. You're going to feel bad about yourself. You're going to feel bad about how your recovery is going. But what I'd encourage you to do is to look inwards, to go calm, to breathe, to go into your thoughts and to have some time to think with your head to think about what other positive changes that you have seen since the first day that you had a stroke, to make a note of those things.

Bill Gasiamis 40:00

And once you know what those positive things are going, check with your heart, put your hand on your heart, connect to your heart, check into your heart, and ask your heart to give you some feedback on what's most important to it right now. And I'll bet you notice that the most important thing to your heart right now, is not what your head thinks is the most important thing. I'm not saying that it's not important for you to get more movement out of your arm, that's clearly important.

Bill Gasiamis 40:38

But I don't believe that that's something that is the top priority of your heart right now. If you check in with your heart right now, and ask it, whether you're the person who asked this question or not check in with your heart right now put your hands on your heart, and just ask your heart what's most important to me right now?

Bill Gasiamis 41:04

You'll get an amazing question. And the relief that it will bring will allow you to think differently about the challenge that you're facing as to whether or not your arm has improved in the last four years. Now. That's the emotional part of the recovery, that's the part that makes it okay, perhaps, might make it okay if your hand is not doing what your head wants it to do, check in with your heart and see what it says.

Bill Gasiamis 41:49

Now, the practical side of that, though, is I've known people who have experienced movement in the arm, which hasn't worked or hasn't moved properly, or hasn't done what they wanted it to do or hasn't healed after stroke. I've known of people who I've interviewed, and I'm not sure which interviews they are.

Bill Gasiamis 42:10

But I've known of people who I've interviewed and spoken to that have had improvements. After many, many, many years, of seeing no change, supposedly no change to the way that their hand worked on mood, there could be a number of reasons for that it could be issue with neurology with the actual neurons in the brain and the connections between the brain and the hand, it could be that those neurons might be impacted not working properly.

Bill Gasiamis 42:42

It could also be a thing called learned non-use. So if you haven't heard of learning non-use, I'm going to try and explain it briefly. But you might want to look it up as well. So learned non-use is when you can't use your arm because of the stroke initially, because the neurons are impacted, and you stop using it.

Bill Gasiamis 43:08

And because you aren't using it while the neurons are inactive or not firing properly or not working properly. It just becomes a habitual thing. And you use negative Neuroplasticity. I'm not sure if it's a real term, but it's a term that I kind of coined or invented, I suppose in my own mind, in my own world, you use negative Neuroplasticity, to teach the arm to not move.

Bill Gasiamis 43:33

And if you have taught your arm to not move, it may not be the impact of the stroke that's causing the arm to not move, it may be the fact that it wasn't

working at the beginning. And you've just reinforced it by not moving it early on. So these are questions to ask perhaps, of your neurologist or your occupational therapist.

Bill Gasiamis 44:02

In the event that you're one of those people who have been impacted by learned non-use, you might be able to see some improvement by creating new neural pathways to rewire movement in your arm. So it's worth a shot it's worth asking about it's worth working on. It's worth contemplating.

Bill Gasiamis 44:28

You might also be getting in your own way of getting your arm moving again. So you might be the person that's responsible for not having movement in your arm. And by that I'm not saying that you should be punished for that or anything like that. I'm just saying is that I was kind of getting in the way of how I was walking because I was favoring one side of my body and therefore the my my weak side, my left side what wasn't getting the movement in the same way that it needed to get it so that it could be as strong as possible.

Bill Gasiamis 45:10

Because I was preferring one side of my body, the side that felt the strongest and the most stable. But the work that I needed to do was on my left side, so I was getting in the way of my left side in rehabilitation, and after that, and even sometimes, still, just out of habit.

Bill Gasiamis 45:30

So it might be that you're getting in the way of your own recovery in some way. Now, with all of that being said, it also might be that your arm may be impacted and never move beyond what it's doing right now. Because there might be physical changes specifically in their part of your brain that impacted your hand and they won't move anymore.

Bill Gasiamis 45:54

But who the hell am I to say that? How the hell do I know? How can anyone say that to you, even a neurologist with a lot of great years of study and research and knowing and meeting other people and having similar experiences, even somebody like that might not be the right person to make such a definitive comment.

Bill Gasiamis 46:21

So who the hell am I to say that I reckon just go for broke, you got nothing to lose, go for it. If it comes back, it's a bonus, it comes back. If it doesn't, well, you know, different to where you started. But I reckon you should go after as much recovery as you can get.

Bill Gasiamis 46:40

So hopefully that gives you some insight into what I think on that particular topic. Now this episode is going really well. I'm loving the questions, and I'm going to keep going. And it seems like it's going to take a lot longer than I thought, because there's still quite a few more questions.

Bill Gasiamis 46:56

So what I might do is, answer a few more and then end this episode, and then do another one to answer the rest of the questions. So if you've asked a question, and haven't had your questions answered, look out for part two of this particular episode.

Stroke Questions Answered - What About John Fetterman?

Bill Gasiamis 47:15

So now the next question. This is a really cool one, because it's already come up in a conversation. And because I'm in Australia, I don't know much about the politics in the United States. However, I have heard about Fetterman, who is from Pennsylvania, John Fetterman.

Bill Gasiamis 47:48

And he is a politician that is running, I think for the Democrats. And he had a stroke as he was coming up to his campaign or during the campaign process at some point I'm not sure exactly when. And what was surprising was to find out that John Fetterman was still going to run for office, and he was still decided that he was still going to go for it.

Bill Gasiamis 48:27

Now when I was asked about it before I knew who John Fetterman was, and I had a brief look into it, I was concerned that perhaps it was naive to have a stroke

survivor go into something as so serious and so challenging as a political election campaign.

Bill Gasiamis 48:52

I can only imagine what that's like, how taxing it is how tiring it is. So I imagine there's a big team of people around him, but still he is the center of attention, right? So he's the person who wants to be in office. So he's going to be front and center. I think it's endearing to a lot of people to have somebody who's gone through a stroke, and then overcome a lot of the challenges of stroke, and then become a politician or achieve his goal.

Bill Gasiamis 49:24

Because that's what we encourage people to do. We in this community, encourage stroke survivors to get better overcome things and get back to life in some way, shape, or form. So I was concerned that it's a bit early and perhaps for the sake of political reasoning, they disregarded the seriousness of John Fetterman's situation and they just went after achieving their outcome of having a politician in power.

Bill Gasiamis 49:56

So that'd be my first concern. And especially his minders and carers around him wouldn't know what it's like to experience stroke. And I imagine he'll be struggling with brain fog, fatigue, emotional issues, concern about life, whether he's going to be alive or that kind of stuff. And maybe he's also even gone shit, I might be dead so I might as well go after this and do the best I can while I'm alive.

Bill Gasiamis 50:21

Who knows? And then the next part of the question about this John Fetterman situation was that Eric Trump called him brain dead. And actually, I love that. I love that because if John Fetterman happens to win, then he can come out and say, I did alright for a brain dead person we won our race to be elected in Pennsylvania, and a brain dead person beat the Republican candidate.

Bill Gasiamis 50:58

So I don't lean one way or another. I don't mind who's running America because I don't live there. But how good would it be if John Fetterman won and then quoted Eric Trump and said to him you know what? We did it brain dead people beat you

guys. Imagine how silly you guys are.

Bill Gasiamis 51:20

Now. That was me, that's what I would do. I'd be petty like that. Maybe John Fetterman is better than me, and wouldn't do that. But it's what I would expect a politician to say. It's definitely what I would expect a Trump to say. And it's definitely what I would expect people who have never experienced stroke to say, it's definitely divisive, it's definitely unnecessary.

Bill Gasiamis 51:45

It's cruel, it's not necessary to be an asshole in politics, although politicians seem to become assholes very, very easily and fall into the role. I think it's not right. But as a stroke survivor who has heard that about John Fetterman, I'm thinking that is one of the best things that they could have said to him. If John Fetterman loses, he can say, well, you guys won Pennsylvania.

Bill Gasiamis 52:21

But you beat a brain dead person to do it. It doesn't say much about you guys. So that's the approach that I would take. If you're a stroke survivor and you got offended by what Eric Trump said about John Fetterman, don't get offended on John Fetterman's behalf, he probably doesn't give a toss about what Eric Trump said, these guys are able to have personal attacks on each other and still go to work every single day and still do what they do.

Bill Gasiamis 52:59

By the way, politicians are their own class of people, these guys do it for a living, and then they probably behind doors, catch up and have drinks and talk about playing golf, and all that type of stuff. This is just something that we see on the surface. It's a way to win votes. And if you're a politician trying to win votes from people who would vote for you, because you called the opposition's candidate braindead, well then that says a lot about the people who are voting for you.

Bill Gasiamis 53:34

So hopefully, if you're a Republican or a Democrat, you haven't been offended by my take on this. I live way, way, way, way away in Australia. I've got no idea what's going on in American politics. And I would respond the same way whether it was a Republican person that was on the back end of some terrible Democrats comments. So in this situation that's what I think about that.

Bill Gasiamis 54:09

And good on John Fetterman. I just hope that looking after him, and that he's actually doing okay, and that he's not at risk of another stroke, and that it ultimately doesn't lead to his demise and stops him from fulfilling his desire to support his community and to be somebody a politician that helps out his community.

Stroke Questions Answered - Confidence Drop After Stroke

Bill Gasiamis 54:37

But yeah, politicians are pretty low at the best of times, so you know, not really a surprise. I think I'm gonna answer this next one and then I might end this podcast episode, and then answer some more questions later on, and the question was, could I talk about dealing with confidence drop post-stroke?

Bill Gasiamis 55:08

Well confidence drop post-stroke is something that's rooted in fear. Basically, if you're feeling less confident about something after stroke, it's rooted in fear. Perhaps it's fear of what other people will think, perhaps it's fear of failing, perhaps it's fear of not being able to do something that you used to do.

Bill Gasiamis 55:46

Perhaps it's a different fear, but it's rooted in fear. And if you check into your body to work out where that fear resides, you might be surprised as to where you discover that fear residing. So when I'm fearful, that's usually in my head that's causing issues, to stop me from trying something or doing something.

Bill Gasiamis 56:17

And the reason is, because my identity has been impacted. So I'll explain something to you your identity resides in your gut, in your belly. So when your belly has been impacted by stroke, that's right. When your belly, your gut has been impacted by stroke, because remember, the head and the gut are connected.

Bill Gasiamis 56:42

And you look back on your life, and you go, I used to do this, and I used to do that. And when you're comparing your new self, to your old self, what you're noticing is

that you can't identify with this new person, you haven't been living in this new version of you for long enough.

Bill Gasiamis 57:02

And you choose things to identify with, that are related to how you used to do things in the past, so for you in the past, walking or looked a certain way. And now walking looks a different way. And when you're looking at yourself through walking used to be like that, I have to get back to walking the way that I used to walk in the past to be considered successfully back to walking, then you might feel really bad about your current version of what walking looks like.

Bill Gasiamis 57:40

And perhaps this is just me hallucinating, and this might not be your experience at all. But perhaps if you're walking in this new way, and you can't reconcile it with the old it's just fear that you might not ever get back there. Or fear about what people think of you now that they see you, fear about what the Trump's might say about you, if they see you walking like this compared to how you were walking last time.

Bill Gasiamis 58:10

So I think that lacking confidence is fear of some thing, fear that you might get emotionally hurt by somebody who calls you a name. fear about whether you'll be judged by people. And honestly, I understand that it's quite normal and common to lose your confidence. But the only thing I've got to say about stroke survivors, and recovery, and the losses they experience is that if you're still alive, you may as well go for all as much life as you can possibly can get out of what's left in years, and what you can achieve with the particular limitations that you have.

Bill Gasiamis 59:08

And why I say that is because I take massive inspiration from Stephen Hawking. And if you haven't heard about Stephen Hawking, you need to Google Stephen Hawking, but his the, I'm sure he was a physicist or some real smart dude who had a condition which meant that he lost the ability to move every single part of his body.

Bill Gasiamis 59:32

He could not speak he could not walk, talk, move, he could not do anything. And somehow he found a way to become one of the most renowned, let me get you the

actual details. Let me quickly jump on and tell you who Stephen Hawking was so I don't do the guy a disservice.

Bill Gasiamis 59:55

And I'll just type here hopefully, you're hearing the typing. Okay, so according to Wikipedia, Stephen Hawking was an English theoretical physicist and cosmologist, and author, who at the time of his death, was the director of research at the center of theoretical cosmology at the University of Cambridge between 1979 and 2009. He was the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge, widely viewed as one of the most prestigious academic posts in the world.

Bill Gasiamis 1:00:39

Now, his health, he was suffering from a condition that most of us could never imagine. His work goes on and on and on his early life, where's his disability, here we go. Hawking had a rare, early onset, slow progressing form of motor neuron disease.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:10

MND, also known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease, a fatal neurodegenerative disease that affects the motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord, which gradually paralyzed him over decades. So over decades, he's slowly lost the ability to walk, talk, move, be physical in any way, he was basically just a guy that sat on his mobility scooter the entire time, until he passed away for decades.

Bill Gasiamis 1:01:45

And with his inability to do anything, he was still the guy who was at the center of this particular organization. At the University of Cambridge, he was still the professor of mathematics, he was still an author, he was still all these things that you're not meant to be when you're as severely disabled as he was.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:12

And talk about all the things that he overcame, to continue working, and being the head honcho the top of his profession, for all these decades, even though he was unable to express himself, in any way, shape, or form. So if you're lacking confidence, just find somebody who does confidence really, really well and model how they do conference, why they do it, and get support by a counselor,

somebody who's doing an emotional counseling practice somebody who knows that psychology involves the psȳché psyche, and get them to help you to discover what the fears are, that you are experiencing, or that are stopping you.

Bill Gasiamis 1:02:18

Do some work to overcome them in the safety of, say, a counselor's office or in the safety of a group of people that are going to support you to overcome them so that you truly feel safe, to go to those places where your fear reside, and to push through it anyway. And then you might find some amazing things that you're able to accomplish and achieve in your life.

Bill Gasiamis 1:03:43

And you might find that you're able to overcome your lack of confidence. And you might find that you are a great example for the people around you who are able bodied and have never had a stroke, but suffer from a lack of confidence. Because they're letting their head run patterns of fear and stop them from achieving living a full life the fullest life you can possibly live.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:14

So there's some of my thoughts. And I would like to encourage you to reach out if there's something you would like help with, if there's something you'd like to overcome, I can support you, I'd be happy to be there for you. And if it's not me, I would encourage you to reach out to anyone else that you're comfortable to get support from and to help you overcome some of the challenges.

Bill Gasiamis 1:04:45

You're on this planet once you're not going to be on this planet again. You might as well go for broke you nearly died. There's no point fearing being alive. There is no point in doing that. Thank you for your questions, there is definitely going to be another episode. So look out for that on the rest of these questions.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:07

And in the meantime, if you are a stroke survivor with a story to share about your experience, come join me on the podcast. Join me on the show. The interviews are not scripted, you do not have to plan for them. All you need to do to qualify is to be a stroke survivor or care for someone who is a stroke survivor. Or you're one of the fabulous people that helps people who are stroke survivors.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:32

If you go to recoveryafterstroke.com/contact and fill out the contact form when I receive it, I will respond with more details on how you can choose a time that works for you and me to meet over zoom. Now recently, all my contact forms on my downloads from our website haven't been working, I am on to rectifying that and most of them should be up and running again.

Bill Gasiamis 1:05:54

So if you've tried before and haven't had any luck, please do try again. Thank you for asking the questions and sending them to me. I really appreciate the opportunity to give you my perspective and my thoughts on those questions. If you don't agree with me, awesome, if you do agree with me awesome, if you don't like what the Trump's said, awesome, if you like the way I responded to what the Trumps said awesome.

Bill Gasiamis 1:06:21

If you have confidence issues, fantastic. If you're thinking about I would rather not have confidence issues anymore, go for it, you will be able to overcome it. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out. Thanks again for being here and listening. I really appreciate you and see you on the next episode.

Intro 1:06:40

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Intro 1:07:09

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Intro 1:07:34

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Intro 1:08:01

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