

Living Transplant Season 4 Ep 12

Guests: [00:00:00] I am so grateful. I am thankful. I am

Charles Cook: very grateful. I am extremely grateful. My gratitude.

Ian: I'm

Charles Cook: grateful. Very, very grateful. I'm grateful.

Candice Coghlan: I'm grateful. Welcome back to the Living Transplant Podcast, Season 4. In this episode, I'm joined by Melissa Sadu, who works in healthcare, is a passionate volunteer, and living liver donor to her brother over 10 years ago.

We spoke about her journey as a donor, relationships with loved ones, how to find tiny moments of joy and gratitude. Throughout this episode, you will also hear clips from members of the transplant community sharing their gratitude. I want to take this moment to share my gratitude first to my kidney donor, my mom, who gave me life twice and gave me the opportunity to have this beautiful life that I do.

Thank you to my hilarious husband, my spunky wee daughter, and to my loving friends and family who are a constant reminder to pause and enjoy these moments together because it's the people who [00:01:00] walk beside us through these journeys that make all the really hard days worth it. And of course, thank you to you, our listeners, please enjoy.

Welcome back to the Living Transplant podcast. I am absolutely thrilled to welcome you to a special episode, an episode all about gratitude. And it is my pleasure to welcome Melissa to our podcast. Thank you so much for joining us.

Melissa Sidhu: Thank you for having me today.

Candice Coghlan: And, uh, Melissa, you were on a previous podcast episode where we got to learn a little bit about your brother's journey with biliary atresia, um, which you said he was born with.

And I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about that for people who maybe didn't hear that episode or who are new to our podcast and tell us a little bit

about that journey with your brother and how it led you to become a living donor.

Melissa Sidhu: Many, many years ago, um, my younger brother, Donald, was born.[00:02:00]

Now, um, that meant that he was born without a bile duct. So, at the time, um, it just so happened he was born in, um, Mercy Hospital in Miami. Um, at the time, my parents were living there. Um, they had a vacation home there in Miami at the time. And it just so happened that, um, one of the surgeons there recommended that my brother receive what's known as the Kasai procedure, which was named after Dr.

Mario Kasai. He had developed this procedure to help children with biliary atresia. How it works is a procedure is so that you sort of fashion a temporary bile duct out of the baby's intestines. So it's sort of like a band aid solution, right? It's, it's pretty amazing, until the um, the infant is stable enough to have a liver transplant.

It was literally, my brother ended up being the first recipient of this procedure in North America. It's, at the time, they literally, my parents, [00:03:00] like, they just didn't have any, you know, resources to send him to Japan to have the procedure done in Japan. Um, where it was originally developed. So it ended up being like sort of front page news, the Miami news.

I think it was two days in a row that, uh, you know, my brother, his story was published and it was literally one of those. Back then, this would be, like, this was in 1976, so they, you know, they would have what's called the telethon back then, where you would literally call in and, you know, give donations for, you know, a patient in need that, you know, didn't have, uh, enough funding for, uh, their surgery, so it was literally one of those sort of stories, um, and it ended up being such a successful procedure that, uh, the surgeon was able to fly, I believe, to the Bahamas just two months later and perform the same, um, Surgery on a female, a young female.

And that ended up being, you know, another pathway to success, exactly, for another patient. So it was really incredible, um, like, that's just part of how incredible his [00:04:00] story was, because the second part of it was when I was actually, um, being screened to be his, uh, liver donor at Toronto General Hospital.

Um, we found out that he literally beat the odds again, because he didn't need his first transplant until age 35, which was just like, it's one of those things where, you know, normally, um, A child born with biliary atresia would need a transplant at a much younger age, like by age five, of course, um, some live a bit longer than that, but the surgeons at Toronto Gen were really, they were really surprised when I said, and I didn't understand what they were trying to get at when they were looking at my paperwork when I submitted it to be, um, they were shocked that my brother was that age and hadn't had a transplant yet.

Like, they just assumed this would have been maybe his second transplant that he'd be needing. So that's part of it, too, as well, of this, you know, these, you hear all these medical stories and you think they don't really happen, but for us, they actually did, you know, these medical, like, miracles, I guess you could say.

Candice Coghlan: Wow. And so, [00:05:00] You mentioned that, that you applied to be a living donor, um, you went through that process of testing. Can you tell me what was that feeling like when you got the call and they said you're compatible and you are eligible and if you want to proceed, you can be the donor for your brother.

Melissa Sidhu: Oh yes.

I remember it like it was yesterday to be honest. My transplant coordinator, Julie, at the time, she called me and I was expecting a call, so I knew it was either going to be good news or bad news, and I remember being, um, in the hallway at work, I remember vividly, and I took the call, and she said to me, I have great news, you know, you're a match, the surgeons finally, you know, did the calculations, and it looks like you're, you know, you're a match for your brother.

And I remember her thinking, I can't stand right now. I felt like my legs were buckling underneath me and I thought, I have to sit down, like, I have to sit down. So I sat down [00:06:00] and it was a carpeted, you know, hallway. Um, and so I sat there and thinking, oh, my goodness, this is really happening. Like, this is after all those weeks of, you know, medical testing during the workup.

For my, uh, application to be a living liver donor for my brother, all the tests, like the MRI and, you know, the scans and the blood work, I thought, wow, you know, it's actually happening now. And this is, you know, I'm actually a match. Like it just, um, for me, it was really this like, overwhelming sense of emotion, right?

Where it was like, I just can't believe that I finally made it to this point because I think the testing was suspended at least four to six weeks. Definitely like around there.

Candice Coghlan: There's those kinds of moments in our life when it feels like everything kind of stops.

Melissa Sidhu: Yes. Yes. That's exactly like the world like kind of stopped and I'm thinking, oh my goodness, like this is actually happening.

So yes, this moment, right. So something that I'll I'll never forget. And, um, [00:07:00] and it's interesting because you think, oh wow, okay, I'm a match. And then I remember thinking, okay, now the logistics. Now we gotta prepare for the surgery, right? And it's just, it's um, it's something that you just, yeah, the thing And prepare you for that in life, right?

It's just like, and I knew I was all in, you know, regardless, like, from, you know, day one, when the screening started, but now it was more about, okay, I got to finish my projects at work. I've got to prepare for everything, right? So it's just, Real life. Exactly. So, um, but you know, the, the hardest part first was like that first, you know, hurdle of, okay, I'm a match.

So that's great. So now we don't have to worry that, you know, because, you know, my heart goes out to people who, you know, are waiting on the wait list and we just don't know, right. We just don't know like how much. Longer, do you have to wait or, or, you know, when are you going to get the call that you have, you know, uh, someone who has donated, um, a deceased donor and, you know, sign their paperwork and, you know, you might be receiving a liver.

So, yeah, it's just one of those things where at least [00:08:00] we knew that, you know, I was living in the same city and, you know, it was a match. So at least that big checkbox was completed, right? And then the rest of it will just fall into place. Right. So, yeah, it was quite a feeling, quite a feeling, actually.

Candice Coghlan: And thinking of like riding on those feelings, you know, your date now you go in, you get all of that prep.

What was that like getting brought down the hallway, ready to go into surgery to save your brother brother's life.

Melissa Sidhu: It, you know, it actually, I have to say, it was quite the experience and I'll never forget it because I remember, um, during my, you know, um, pre surgical check in, I was literally lying in the bed.

I had my mom with me and my transplant coordinator with me, and they were introducing me to the transplant team, um, that would be, you know, putting on me that day. And, uh, it was exciting for me because at the time I, Actually was working at the [00:09:00] university health network in the research ethics board department.

And it was so exciting to meet, um, everybody like the surgeons and, you know, they said, okay, we're here now. We're going to mark you for surgery. It's very, you know, methodical. They went through the actual, um, surgical checklist, um, that, uh, actually one of my, one of my dearest friends helped, um, Developed that surgical checklist.

So it's interesting. A little side note that surgical checklist was developed actually at Toronto General Hospital. Um, and the WHO later picked it up as literally when they did their whole scan worldwide of. Surgical checklists, and they were like, set the standard. The hospital checklist was the only one in Canada that was picked up.

So, yeah, so I knew, I was like, okay, I'm going through the checklist and then it was interesting because, you know, I met my surgeon and then they said, oh, here comes, you know, your, your anesthesiologist. And let me tell you, nothing could prepare me because all of a sudden he walked in the room and he says to me, let's do this, Melissa.

And it [00:10:00] turns out he was a research ethics board member and we had just worked on a project involving, um, uh, a tap, what's called attack. Block TAP. abdominus plane block for breast reconstruction. It was a, you know, a research project that was going to be happening at Universal Health Network. And so now here he was coming three weeks later to conduct this tap block on me for my liver donor surgery.

Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. And you know, to be honest, I'm grateful that all my, like, you know, my heart rate and my blood pressure was taken before that moment because I think my heart rate shot up and I couldn't believe that. Um, technically someone I knew from work was actually going to be my anesthesiologist.

And I think it was perfect. It was great. It was perfect. And it was like, I said, okay, that's it. I closed my eyes and I thought, I'm going to take this as a sign that, um, God really does have a sense of humor and he is actually laughing in this moment at me and everything's going to be [00:11:00] fine. I'm, you know, everything's going to be fine on that cervical table and I'm going to have a cheerleader there with me because a friend from work and, and I think it was great because it.

It sort of broke the tension in the room with my mom being so stressed with having, you know, her daughter and her son both going under the knife, quote unquote, like in the same, you know, hospital the same day and, um, and my transplant coordinator, um, nurse, she, she just, like, you could tell she, she, she was trying so hard not to laugh because she realized, because this is terrible, what parts of me is he going to see because I have to face him again at work later.

It's like, what? Oh, it's like, you know, when you go through that consent form, they give you as a living liberty, this wasn't mentioned in the consent form that, you know, if you work here, you may end up with a coworker. But I think for my mother, it was great because She at the time was still a practicing nurse.

She's retired now, but I think for her, it was a sense of relief knowing that at least there was going to be someone in the [00:12:00] operating room who knew me and was going to be, you know, you know, advocating and sort of like cheering, cheering me on in a way. Yeah. And then it was interesting because, you know, I'd never been in an operating room and it was just like, It was interesting to see, right?

He introduced me to the nurses, um, and he said, you know, because you're healthy enough, we just need you to just like shimmy over onto the operating table, right? And when you look at that operating table, it's so narrow. Like, I, I don't understand how they get these big hockey players on there or football players on there.

Right. I thought, okay, that's it, you know, um, I'm going to flop over like a seal unless you, I said, can you lift the guard? Like, you know, cause he says you're healthy enough that, you know, you can just flop over. Yeah. And, uh, yeah. And that's when they were nurses and he, they, they all started laughing. So it was great.

We were having a great time in there. And then my anesthesiologist just, he literally just asked me, he was doing something behind me while I was laying

there and he was asking me several questions. And then before I knew it. I was out, like I just, [00:13:00] yeah, and then the next thing I knew I woke up in recovery, and he was the first person to check in on me.

Yeah, it was great, and he said, you know, you did well, you know, your brother's in surgery now, and you know, things are going just as we planned, so you just need to, like, And, you know, rest assured that everything's going to be fine. So, yes, you know, I think it really, I was really fortunate that he ended up being my anesthesiologist that day, even though, um, yeah, I panicked in the moment when I found out.

Candice Coghlan: Oh, for sure. You would. Yeah. That's so cool. That's really cool. And so, you know, I know post surgery that first kind of day to two days even is a little bit groggy for most people, but, um, when. You found out that, you know, the extraction of your piece of your liver went well, and then once, uh, the transplant happened for your brother and you found out that that was a success, how did that feel?

Melissa Sidhu: That was, I would have to say, If I describe it as like, it's this sort [00:14:00] of like immense weight lifted off my shoulders. It's like, and then I remember thinking, oh, my goodness, like, it was like, this is like this roller coaster ride of emotions, right? Between becoming, you know, you need to watch your, your, your sibling and liver failure and then going through the process of like getting sick and then myself being like, you know, told that I'm a match and then going through surgery, both of you, you know, together that same day.

And then it was just like, Unbelievable, because I realized we actually did this, like, we pulled it off somehow, obviously, you know, with the help of the amazing transplant team, um, but it felt like Christmas Day, I think, in a way, is how I would describe it, it was just like, yeah, I have to say, like, I breathed probably the biggest sigh of relief in my entire life, it was like, oh my goodness, he's going to be fine, everything's going to be great, this sort of feeling of like, you know, gratitude, and just like, How did it all work out?

Like on that day, how did the stars align and how did [00:15:00] you know what I mean? Like how did everything, you know, surgery and waking up and recovery and hearing that, um, you know, my brother was doing well and that, you know, now we just, it's the, the road to recovery is next. So, again, another checkbox has been checked off.

So the surgery is done and now it's just recovery. And, uh, you know, that was, it was definitely a process that was a lot easier having the amazing transplant team. Like the. Between the nurses and the doctors and the residents and the fellows and and even, you know, the facility staff everyone everyone.

It's as if they were all. Handpicked to be part of that team. Like, it was like this dream team. I guess I could, if I want to call it like people who just all had that same common goal, right? Like, you know, making sure, you know, you recovered and, um, you got the, you received, like, the optimal care that you needed.

To sort of, you know, they always said, you know, they always reminded us, you know, eventually we're going to need your bed, so you need to get healthy and move on, right? Back to normal life, [00:16:00] right? And recover at home, right? Because someone else is going to need that bed. So the nurses said, you know, you know, we're going to remember you and your brother because it was such a great story.

Like it's one of those things where, um, you know, you'd be surprised, they said, like how difficult it is for family members to come forward. It's not easy. What you did is not easy, even though. Yeah, I think my perception of risk was different because I worked in medical research and, you know, I'd spend my days looking at risk levels right in research for for patients.

So I guess my perspective was completely different. My level of. I guess my capacity for risk was probably different having that explained to me over and over it was, it was probably good, but I guess, I don't know, I never thought about the negative outcome that could have happened. I guess I went in there laser focused and it's funny because I guess I was more worried about my brother than myself.

You know, it's one of those things where you think I got to do this and that's it. Right. It's like, you're just like set with this goal. [00:17:00] And, um, yeah, it was definitely. A team effort with the transplant team. Yes, for sure. I have to say. And, um, that's, that's something I'll never forget.

Candice Coghlan: And now, please enjoy a message of gratitude.

Ian: I'm grateful for the opportunity UHN gave me to make a difference in someone's life and be a living organ donor. It has made a significant positive difference in my life.

Candice Coghlan: And, you know, that gratitude that you talk about, I hear from donors all the time that they're so grateful that they got to be the one.

And you know, hearing how you talk about this process, it's very similar to the way that my mom talks about it too, that in her head, she knew that it was going to be okay. And to her, it was going to be her and she was the one that was going to do this and she listened to the risk. She listened to, you know, what she needed to be told.

But at the end of the day, you know, she made that decision based on [00:18:00] the fact that she really wanted to do that. And that she was so grateful that it was her that got to do it. And it blows my mind every time I get to talk to donors, because you seem to all have that theme of that your gratitude, like that you're grateful that you got to do it.

Meanwhile, you've saved our lives and, and you still have this interesting perspective. I'm wondering if you can talk about that.

Melissa Sidhu: Yeah. I mean, people always treat me. As such a hero, but in all honesty, I just had to lay there, right? It was really the search, the brilliant surgeons that, you know, um, had to, had to perform the surgery and, and, you know, extract my liver and implanted into my brother.

So, um, yes, you know, I have to say though, being part of the patient advisory council, I, I'm actually in the, um, amazing company of people who. been anonymous living liver donors and these people are my heroes because, you know, they [00:19:00] most of them probably don't ever get a chance to meet the recipient who they saved.

And, you know, I think, yes, sure, maybe you know for me I thought, you know, I'm going to save my brother's life and I just want him to be healthy and live, you know, his life but. I think the real heroes are these anonymous living donors. Like these are the people that I'm like amazing. And, uh, you know, I hold them in the highest regard because I mean, just to know that there are people out there that are completely selfless and completely altruistic, like for me, you could say that I was kind of selfish because I wanted my brother to stay in my life, right?

So yes, again, it goes back to the gratitude of. It is a privilege to be a living liver donor.

Candice Coghlan: I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about maybe some of the differences, um, you know, you, you donated now almost 12 years ago, I guess. Um, so is there something, um, that you're grateful for perhaps, you know, that, that you were grateful for back [00:20:00] then that is different from what you're grateful for today?

Has that changed at all?

Melissa Sidhu: Yes, it actually has. I'm thinking, you know, back then we were grateful that everything worked out and we both, um, survived the transplant procedure, you know, they do warn you, though, after the transplant, that there is always that risk of rejection, right? Um, but they said, you know, luckily the rate for rejection for livers is low in comparison to kidney, um, transplants, heart and lung.

But, you know, in the back of our minds, my brother and I always knew that the risk wasn't zero. Even though it was low, it wasn't zero, right? So I think looking back now, I'm grateful that he never experienced an acute liver rejection episode. That's another piece of, you know, being grateful for, uh, you know, health in general, right?

Like it's something that we [00:21:00] should never take for granted and that my mom always used to say that your health is your wealth and she's right I mean you and I both know what it's like when when you lose that to have it We take it for granted every day, but it's it's amazing right to be able to you know Live a healthy life and to be in the company of your family and friends and leave and live a productive life I think your perspective really does change when you see a family member Go into you know organ failure And struggling With medications and not knowing again, it goes back to this fear of the unknown when you're when you're on the transplant wait list and you don't know, I mean, um, my brother's a positive blood type.

And that's one of the longest wait lists right for her liver. Unfortunately, with liver failure. It's not like kidney failure where, you know, if you are suitable for dialysis, you can, you know, prolong your life and at least live. Okay. Um, receiving dialysis with with liver. It's, it's not the [00:22:00] case. We're not there yet in terms of medical research.

We're not there yet. So, um, the stakes were quite high that in that respect. So, looking back, you know, it's, it's, it's like, you know, you watch these sort of medical dramas play out on TV. And then when you realize, oh, my goodness, I actually lived through something like

Candice Coghlan: that one. Yeah, right. I mean,

Melissa Sidhu: exactly.

Candice Coghlan: And now please enjoy another message of gratitude.

Charles Cook: I am very grateful that the miracle of organ donation and transplant have allowed me to live long enough to witness my two fantastic young adult offspring to grow up, move out into the real world, live their lives and do their thing. What a blessing.

Candice Coghlan: So thinking about, you know, all of these positivity movements, um, that, you know, we hear a lot about and staying in gratitude and staying in all of these, you know, healthy, good, positive spaces.

You know, sometimes it can be frustrating when you're going through something [00:23:00] like a health scare to always have to stay in that good space. And I always tell people, give yourself that. Grace to have really bad days and and then, you know, pick yourself back up and and keep going, but I'm wondering if you have any advice for, you know, donors or family members who are going through this, or even, you know, people like myself and your brother who are, um, waiting for an organ on.

How to kind of balance that, you know, being real, but also, you know, being grateful that we're still here, even though we are going through something really hard.

Melissa Sidhu: Me personally at the time, um, you know, it was really, um, difficult to, Again, you know, literally, my brother was in the hospital and liver failure and I was literally working across the street.

So, in a way, it was a blessing that I could go and visit him, but back at my desk and, you know, working away with my huge pile of, you know, workload, [00:24:00] um, I think, yes, just staying positive and knowing that, um, at least for me, going through the workup process, um, and screening to become a living liver donor, at least I knew.

That there was something in the works and something that, you know, a means to a solution, I guess. And my brother was still, of course, on the transplant wait list. So at least, you know, staying positive. It's not easy, you're right, because there's good days and bad days for everyone. But knowing that you're, you're doing your best each day, right?

Just to get through the day. Um, and I think for most of us, whether you're in good health or not, to try to find that bit of joy and gratitude in each day. It may be a sliver some days or maybe, you know, something much bigger and on other days, but at least to find that somehow, you know, there's challenges I had, you know, days where I didn't feel like injecting myself with a blood thinner, right?

Like, you know, it was only once a day, you know, it's like, [00:25:00] whatever. I think it was, I don't know, five, six weeks daily, but it was only one day, but there's ups and downs, right? There's days where feel great. And then there's days where you're just like, oh, you know, today I'm going to take it a bit easier.

Right. It's just sort of like. You know, um, but it's, it's more about just finding that joy, like, even if I remember in the hospital, one of the things I discovered, um, at Toronto general was that they would serve me like rice pudding and every day I'm like, okay, I'm going to get rice puddings. Yes. So, you know, and then, of course, having visitors helps and, and it's just these little things that, you know, get you through, um, the tough times, right?

You know, the tiredness or the, the fact that, you know, um, I couldn't tolerate some of the hydromorphone and it was making me nauseous, but at least, you know, at some point I'm going to have rice pudding. So it's like, right. So it's just being grateful for the little things, um, to get you through the rough.

Yeah. Times, [00:26:00] right?

Candice Coghlan: And next, please enjoy a message of gratitude.

Guests: I am so grateful for my son, my heroic donor for giving me the gift of life. It is a gift that I cherish every day, and that has forever changed my outlook on life and all its blessings. I am also so grateful and indebted to the wonderful surgical and care staff at UHN for their everyday acts of kindness, their energy, and their passion.

I give thanks to them every single day.

Candice Coghlan: I, uh, I've told this story to a couple people, but, um, you know, I had moments, uh, it was a crash start and so at 24 was in hospital for three weeks, you know, trying to get stable enough to go home to do dialysis in center and then eventually I did home dialysis, but, um, I had a day where I had just received my, um, hemo catheter in my chest.

And I [00:27:00] told my mom, like, I don't want to see anybody at all, no matter who comes, I don't want to see them. And I had a group of four friends who I've known since high school who showed up at the hospital and, uh, they had to leave all of these balloons in their car because they weren't allowed to bring the balloons into the hospital, obviously.

Um, but, um, one of them, um, Who was born, um, with, with two fingers on her left hand, who is one of the funniest people I've ever met in my life. She brought me an eye patch. And she said to me, you know, you might think that people are staring at your, at your tube. You might think that people are staring at you because you're sitting in a wheelchair because you're too weak right now.

But if you put this eyepatch on, nobody's going to look at any of that. They're going to look at your eyepatch and either think that person is hilarious. What is she up to? Oops. Oops. Or, you know, it'll start a conversation and you guys can actually talk. And it was a day that I, [00:28:00] I had told my mom, I didn't want to see a single soul and having those four people, um, and, you know, having my mom know that I actually did need to see them as well was one of those moments that I'll never forget.

And even though I don't talk to those four as often as I wish I did, it was one of those days that, you know, really changed my perspective. And it made it so much easier to just kind of hold on to those little moments of joy that you can have through really, really tough, tough times. And, uh, since they weren't able to give me the balloons, they actually went to the university campus with all of the balloons and they just handed them out to, like, random people and took pictures for me and send me the pictures of these people getting balloons.

And they just like made those people's day. And it was just kind of like this ripple effect of, of joy that they brought without even knowing what really the impact was. And, you know, I'm, I'm 15 years later now, still [00:29:00] talking about that moment in the hospital that they gave me. And so You know, sometimes we think, like you said, it's, it's these big moments of gratitude, like the transplant, because of course, you know, as recipients, There's no words that we can put together that will ever properly say thank you for that gift of life.

But then there's also those tiny, funny little moments of, you know, little things that people do for us along the way that, you know, you can, you can bring gratitude for and

Melissa Sidhu: yes, honestly, uh, the, the eye patch is brilliant, though. I'm going to have to say your friend, that is something I've never heard of.

And that is so brilliant. It's true. Um, yeah, when my brother was in liver failure, I'll never forget the story. Um, because he was so jaundiced, um, and, uh, you know, he would go into the same grocery store and buy groceries, even though he was sick. He, he just, I have to say he handled it quite well. And one day, one of the, one of the employees at the store said, you know.

I [00:30:00] have to ask you, like, why, like, what is wrong with you? Like, I, I know, you know, I see you in here and you just keep getting more and more yellow. And my brother said, well, I'm in liver failure. Right. And he said, he said, like, how do you do it? And my brother said, well, I have to do it. I got my groceries. I got to feed myself.

So, yeah, I mean, there's, you know, You literally forget sometimes like, you know, that you're struggling in a big way, but like, you know, you try to like, again, there's the little things that in the day to day life, you know, that you just kind of have to remember that there are moments of joy, but then there's the lights and the levity and that whatever the, the lighter parts of it too, and the funny things like.

Like the bad gas he had, like days after the transplant, right? Like, things like that, like the funny things that, you know, that just happen and you know, you realize you're going to have to deal with, right? So I guess it's more about the ups and downs. Yeah. It's just the gratitude again for, [00:31:00] um, the people who supported me through that journey and um, and that we both, my brother and I made it through fine, just fine.

And, uh, you know, 12 years later, you know, looking back. The memories will always be there, and it's, it's just something that, you know, nothing in life can prepare you for, and it's one of those things where you, you look back and you think, you know, how, like, how did this actually happen for us? And how did it, how did it all go so well?

Like, you're scratching your head that the gratitude of having that in your life, that experience, and then the way it changes you forever, that indelible mark it leaves on you, for the better, right? So I think, uh, I think during this time of Thanksgiving, it is a reminder of thankful for is your health, your family, your friends, the fact that you had to, you know, you were called upon to do something great in your life and you, you roared the occasion and you persevered.

Candice Coghlan: And now, please enjoy another [00:32:00] message of gratitude.

Bill Armstrong: As a recent successful kidney transplant recipient, my wife was the donor. I've been asked this question before, what am I most grateful for through this experience? And outside of all the obvious answers, I think the answer that comes to my mind is that I'm grateful for the opportunity that this experience has provided me to be able to give back to people.

As a transplant ambassador, I talk with people a lot who are in the situation that I was in six years ago and being able to help them through their concerns and their fears. And help them get to the other side means a lot to me.

Candice Coghlan: I'm wondering if, um, you could help me out. We had some, uh, submissions from our Gratitude Walls, um, which we, each year we put Gratitude Walls out for Living Donation Week.

And we have people [00:33:00] submit, um, What they're grateful for what they want to say. Thanks for and we had some really remarkable ones that were sent in and there's there's hundreds of them. People can go. I'll put the link in our show notes and the link in the description. So people can check back on the last few years of the gratitude walls if they want to as well.

But I'm going to read a couple and I'm wondering if you can read a couple as well.

Melissa Sidhu: I would love to. Thank you.

Candice Coghlan: So this first one that we have on our gratitude wall is from, um, Delfina and her mom. And, uh, so there's two messages here. The one from Delfina, uh, she's eight and it says, thank you, mommy. I love you.

And, uh, from her mom says, thank you right back. You saved mommy just as much as I saved you. And thank you to Toronto General and SickKids for being the world class facilities that you are and allowing us to join you in being part of the gift of life.

Melissa Sidhu: To the [00:34:00] transplant team that saved my dad's life, I couldn't be more grateful.

Words cannot describe the amount of gratitude I feel. They only gave my dad less than eight months, sorry, less than nine months to live. With five months left, I was able to proceed with the liver donation to my father. Without the UHN team, my father would not be here today. The

Candice Coghlan: next one says, I want to thank my donor, my wife, you are the most selfless person I know.

You are so strong, brave, and loved. You saved my life.

Melissa Sidhu: Saving a life is a miracle. Saving my big brother's life was a blessing and one of my greatest gifts. I don't think I'm a hero. I'm just a little sister who loves her big brother. A million thank yous to the many doctors and the nurses. That made this all possible.

True heroes to me were my wonderful husband, my handsome doodle, my [00:35:00] amazing parents, and my beautiful best friend. They showed me the most unconditional love and kindness in my very lengthy recovery. Sometimes, thank you just isn't enough. And

Candice Coghlan: that one really hit.

Melissa Sidhu: Oh, it did. Oh, it did. I thought I could get through.

I thought I could get through this. But that one hit.

Candice Coghlan: Yeah. It's amazing to get to read all of these and, uh, know that we're part of this community of, uh, incredible people who are so, uh, gracious and strong and brave and Um, you know, bring that unconditional love. It really truly does show us the goodness in people and the kindness, uh, that, that others have for each other.

Melissa Sidhu: It really does. It really does. It's, um, it is, it is, you know, amazing that, um, community of donors and recipients that we have [00:36:00] and the stories, um, and the positivity and the gratitude. I think it really is. It truly is amazing. Um, and that, uh, again, we're all, you know, Brought together by, you know, the transplant community, and I think that's the one common thread we have, um, that these stories, they, no matter what, they're just incredible, um, human, the human sort of side of life, and, and I guess the, again, with, with, with health and, and just being, um, you know, able to share these stories and tell these stories and, and having conversations Um, the team, uh, yourself and, and Paula able to sort of, you know, connect us that way and keep these, these stories and these, um, events and, um, and podcasts going, I think is something that we're all grateful for because, uh, I know, for instance, my brother.

His friend went through his own transplant journey, and I think it was helpful for [00:37:00] him to see the story that my brother and I had on the website. Um, like, when he was going through his workup process for his loved one. Um, so, yeah, I think for me, looking back, um, yeah, looking back at the stories I knew about before I became a donor for my brother and now looking at the resources that people have now.

Oh, it's Unbelievable, to be honest. Um, so, again, thank you for your service.

Candice Coghlan: Beautiful. That was so well said. Thank you so much. I'm so grateful to have gotten this time with you and, uh, to explore our gratitude together, so thank you so much for joining me today.

Melissa Sidhu: Thank you so much for having me today, Candice.

This has been a wonderful time, uh, to share stories with you about my transplant journey with my brother and to listen to your transplant journey as well. Thank you again.

Candice Coghlan: We hope you enjoyed this episode of the Living Transplant [00:38:00] podcast. If you did, please leave us a review and share with your friends.

Don't forget to subscribe to Living Transplant wherever you are listening today. If you have any ideas for podcast episodes, you can reach out to us at livingoregondonation@uhn.ca. For more information about living organ donation, you can visit us at www.livingorgandonation.ca. Special thanks to LEAD Podcasting for editing this episode and for production support.

Thanks to Paula Neves, our advisor to the show. I'm your host, Candace Coghlan. Thanks for spending your time with us.