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Date : 10-Apr-2009 Edition : Noida Page No.: 3 Page Name: n.a. Size: 425.13 sq. cm

Sector: Pharma Healthcare and Biotech Circulation: 0 AVE: Rs.0.00 Frequency: Fortnightly

Hindustan Times - Guardian Health Chronicle

Dealing with losses

Dealing with losses is an inevitable part of growing old. Though we don't want to speak about it, hush the issue whenever raised furtively, the fact remains that as you grow old you might lose a companion, a sibling, a friend, spouse, or a child in your journey. Archana Darshan writes...

Shankar Ghose, President Charkha—an NGO that works towards getting the voices heard of the Indians living in rural India, where the real India lives, lost his only son, Sanjoy to militancy in Asam in the year 1994. With trembling voice, he recalls that when the family was dissuading Sanjoy to go to militancy-ridden Asam, he asked, "Then whose son will you send?"

Though life dealt an irreparable blow to Shankar, this successful corporate professional found his calling in Charkha, and took reins of the organisation. He declined the renewal of his term as Executive Director, National Foundation for India and thought of taking life as it comes and playing more golf in 2000. But, when he saw his son's dream faltering in the absence of a leader, he filled in, as the head of Charkha. "This is a classic case of father following son's foot steps," says Shankar. This septuagenarian (A person who is 70 years old or between the ages of 70 and 80) had just returned from a visit to J&K and would be going to Ladakh in July after taking confirmation of his cardiologist. Once he joined Charkha, he has gone to remote areas of India bringing the voices of those who are distant and remote to mainstream India. "Just imagine, how much you know about people living in Andaman and Nicobar islands?" he questions. "Have you thought what people living in those areas must be feeling about and belonging to India will not happen until media begins to give importance to issues that concern all Indians," reasons Shankar.

Though, Ghose joined Charkha late, his philanthropic leanings were apparent while he was working at DCM Sri Ram. When a colleague fell ill, he extended all his support to her so much so that he arranged his driver to ferry her to and fro from office and to the physiotherapist. In another instance when a young and bright colleague of his was suffering from cancer, they took her to Harmala Gupta of Can Support so that she could get palliative care. When she passed away, Ghose himself brought her body down from the upstairs home that she was living. He says, "I learned a lot from her vivacious spirit."

Even today, Ghose has no time to pause; he works seven days a week and frowns at the resigned approach of people as they become old. He plays golf, goes for his walks and loves to help the community in whichever way he can, like getting the child of the presswala admitted to a school. "I love listening to music and would be actively involved with Charkha, as long as God wants me to," says Shankar Ghose.

age matters

Expert speaks

The loss of a loved one is a difficult situation for any individual. Though we all know that death is a natural part of our existence, nevertheless whenever we are faced with this situation it takes time to accept it and normalise the entire situation for ourselves. Coping with this situation is not an easy task and it calls upon the utilization of numerous resources on our part. One of the most important things is to have adequate social support, in the form of friends and family who provide the opportunity to talk, discuss and develop an acceptance of the situation and also help in disengaging and distracting one's self from the situation.

It is important to accept what has happened and this does take some time to develop as adjustment to any change requires time. At the same time, however, it is essential to be proactively engaged in trying to normalise the situation. Blaming one's self and stopping routine activities does not help in any which way. It thus becomes essential to engage and immerse yourself fully with family, peers and work and try and continue with life in as normal a fashion as possible. And any significant disturbances in mood lasting over months need professional help as well. If you wish to know more about Charkha, please visit www.charkha.org.

> The loss of a loved one is a difficult situation for any individual. It's all about how you take on life after this. Shankar Ghose, President Charkha-an NGO that works towards getting the voices heard of rural India can be the classic case that how to deal with such losses in life.

(Dr. Samir Parikh, Chief of Department of Mental Health & Behavioral Sciences, Max Hospital.)

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