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# NEWSLETTER

This is a monthly diary giving updates on activities at Graceful Living and providing information on ageing 'gracefully' to help elders live a life with maximum ease



GRACEFUL LIVING

LOVE LIFE LIBERTY

## OLD PEOPLE ARE HAPPIER THAN PEOPLE IN THEIR 20s

Despite the physical ravages of age, older people are actually happier than younger adults. So finds a new study, published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, in which researchers analysed data collected from a random sample of 1,546 people from ages 21 to 99 in San Diego. After a phone interview, the people in the study filled out a long survey asking about their physical, cognitive and mental health. Questions/topics included on how happy and satisfied with life they were, as well as how depressed, anxious or stressed they were.

"There's this idea that old age is bad, it's all gloom and doom and older people are usually depressed, grumpy and unhappy," says study author Dr Dilip Jeste, a geriatric psychiatrist and director of the Centre on Healthy Ageing at the University of California, San Diego.

Older people were physically more disabled and had more cognitive impairment than younger ones—the natural deterioration of ageing—but in mental health, the advantage flipped. People in their 20s and 30s reported having the highest levels of depression, anxiety and stress, plus the lowest levels of happiness, satisfaction and well-being. Older people, surprisingly, were the happiest.

The study was just a snapshot in time; it didn't follow people to track how their answers changed throughout their own lives. But taken as a whole, "as they got older, it looks like things started getting better for them", Jeste says. "It suggests that with age, there's a progressive improvement in mental health."

What's so terribly hard about being young? After the turbulence of adolescence, real life begins, with its many financial, educational, romantic and career-oriented demands, Jeste says.



Older people are much better able to brush off life's small stressors and accumulate a valuable thing called **wisdom**: being emotionally stable and compassionate, knowing yourself and being able to make smart social decisions, Jeste says.

Some evidence suggests that life today also really is easier for older folks than it used to be; one study found that depressive symptoms in late life have declined from 1998 to 2008. Other research supports a worsening trend for younger adults, who seem to have more depression and anxiety than youth in recent decades.

Though the reasons why aren't yet clear, "It is conceivable that the changes in societal functioning because of progressive globalization, technology development, increased competition for higher education and for better paying jobs and changing roles of women in the society are likely to impact young women and men more than they might affect older people," Jeste says. "Any relatively rapid changes tend to bring in stress for the people most affected."

It makes so much intuitive sense that most people don't question it—if you're happy, or find ways to make yourself happier, you'll be better off, both physically and mentally. No surprise either that some studies have also connected happiness to longer life.

By Mandy Oaklander,  
Time Health



## BEING HAPPY WON'T MAKE YOU LIVE LONGER

It makes so much intuitive sense that most people don't question it—if you're happy, or find ways to make yourself happier, you'll be better off, both physically and mentally. No surprise either that some studies have also connected happiness to longer life. But Bette Liu from the University of New South Wales and her colleagues are about to turn this truism on its head. In a study published in the *Lancet*, the researchers report that happiness doesn't have much to do with living longer after all.

In a study, nearly 720,000 middle-aged women were followed long-term to determine which factors were related to their mortality. They rated their happiness as well as answered questions about their health and other lifestyle habits, including whether they smoked, how much education they attained, their relationship status and the amount of stress they felt.

When Liu and her colleagues first correlated the women's happiness scores with their mortality rates, they found that women who reported being happier tended to live longer, and the women reporting more unhappiness tended to die earlier. But when they controlled factors such as health, they found that there was not statistically significant difference between the women who were happy and those who were unhappy. In other words, it wasn't their happiness that was linked to mortality, but other things, most notably their health, that was really driving the connection.

"Our results show that being happier in itself doesn't make you live longer. It's the poor health of those individuals who are unhappy that actually explains why they might have higher death rates," says Liu.

Liu and her team came to this conclusion by pooling together the results from asking the women questions about their happiness and their health and stress separately. "We asked very separate and discrete questions about happiness, health, stress, how relaxed people felt and how often they felt in control," says Liu. They also looked among just women who reported being in good health and did not find differences in mortality among those who said they were happy vs those who were unhappy. They also did not find any differences when they looked just at women who reported being in poor health.

By Alice Park, Time Health



## ISSUES OF SENIOR WOMEN



**Ms Amruta Lovekar**

Gerontologist & Project Coordinator, Graceful Living

It is a belief that women live longer than men. Older women now constitute the majority in practically every country in the world. This growing number and proportion of women in the population as a whole and their longer life expectancy is called the 'feminisation of ageing'. Although they form a majority of older population, their problems are hugely different and need to be understood separately rather than as issues of old age. Issues which are faced by majority of older women have been outlined in brief.

They are economically dependent, less educated, have less access to health care, lesser health-seeking behaviour and hence spend more years in bad health. This also

leads to them being more vulnerable in their later years. Many women get married, have children and then become responsible for caring for their own children and of other family members throughout their lives. By the time they are 60 they are likely to have been unemployed, therefore they will have less financial security with fewer savings and assets and no pension to support an adequate standard of living. They become financially reliant on their families for an increasing period of time. This can restrict their capacity to exercise rights, make choices and access services. A lifetime of inequalities has led to many women being unable to lead happy, healthy and joyful lives.

While much of late life experiences of women are adverse, there is research evidence that some aspects of the ageing process are positive for women. Studies have shown that women feel greater sense of fulfilment and self-actualisation than during their younger years. As women generally feel powerless towards many things in a male-dominated society, they tend to be less depressed in old age than older men who are unused to the powerlessness and loss of control that accompany old age. The inherent resilience among women is known to help them cope with old age problems better than their male counterparts. As they say, every dark cloud has some silver lining.

## FOR LONELY HEARTS OF KANDIVALI VILLAGE ELDERS... 'MAIN HOON NA'

*From counselling to taking care of their medical needs, this group of volunteers is always by their side*

MUMBAI: To fill the void of elderly people who are alone, the residents of Thakur Village, Kandivali (East), have launched an initiative called 'Main Hoon Na' for more than 1,100 senior citizens whose children do not stay in the city or country.

"Main Hoon Na is our attempt to tune in and listen to the lonely hearts of senior citizens and those in distress," said Harsha Kumara Udipi, founder of Soch Sayani Group in Kandivali. "In the prevailing society, work commitments take dear and near ones from parents, make them sulk alone in their golden age. They need to be heard, talked and attended to. We just want to stretch our hands to those who are needy."

A dedicated pool of volunteers will respond to distress calls where they will listen, guide, counsel on various topics and help

the senior citizens in any emergency situations like arranging ambulances, hospital admission, etc.

Ravi Kalra, who is spearheading this initiative from Thakur Village, said, "Mostly, we have senior citizens whose kids are living abroad or outside Mumbai. There are more than 1,100 such couples in Thakur Village and Lokhandwala Complex. We learnt that during late hours if a senior citizen was injured or ill, there was nobody to take care of them. So, we have now formed an organised group to help each other. Seniors, whose kids are not with them, feel alone and they require some emotional help."

He added that the group has 10 people who have volunteered based on their availability. They also have advocates for legal requirements and a medical team which will cater to the psychological and social needs.

"The group is functional," said Kalra. "In the

US, this concept is called 'time bank', where if I volunteer to help someone, when I become old, someone else will volunteer to help me."

In collaboration with Vishwa Arpan Foundation, the group will provide medical equipment like wheelchairs, toilet chairs, backrests, walkers, sticks and crutches free of charge for eight months and after that Rs 100 will be charged every month.

"It becomes stressful when people meet with some unfortunate event where they need to buy some expensive medical equipment that too just for a few months," Hemen Chauhan, founder of Vishwa Arpan Foundation, said. "This foundation provides free medical equipment temporarily with some security deposit against any damage to the equipment. For a longer period, we do charge some nominal fee after eight months."

*Credit: Linah Balliga, Hindustan Times, March 6, 2023.*

“

In life, it is important to know when to stop arguing with people and simply let them be wrong.

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## SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS OF GL

- **Group Sessions at Ghatkopar Senior Association on 1 February:** Graceful Living, in collaboration with Echoing Healthy Ageing, organized group sessions at the Ghatkopar Senior Association on February 1, 2023. There were four cognitive stimulation sessions. Five seniors from this association participated in these sessions which included solving puzzles, art, drawing, crafts and movement therapy. The sessions were conducted by psychologists and counsellors from Echoing Healthy Ageing.
- **Grandparents Day Celebration at Parle Tilak School on 10 February:** Graceful Living, in collaboration with Parle Tilak School, celebrated Grandparents Day on February 10, 2023. The main purpose of this program was conducting stimulating and recreational programs for grandparents with some inputs from children for sensitizing them towards older adults. Ms Amruta Lovekar explained the importance of mental health, demonstrated 'Brain Gym' exercises, and also conducted a *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* Quiz. She was assisted by Ms Akanksha and Mr Raj. Ms Jyoti Penkar and Ms Anuja Patil were present as volunteers and helped the Graceful Living team. Total participants: 250 older adults attended. All participants enthusiastically performed the Brain Gym exercises, answered the quiz questions. The first five runners-up were awarded prizes for the quiz. The school PTA members had decorated the school hall and also helped out during the program.
- **Survey - Seniors Living Alone:** Graceful Living initiated this survey for understanding needs of seniors who are living alone, informing them about our services and fulfilling their requirements as best possible. GL team has contacted active senior citizens associations and with their help interviewed seniors living alone. Active members of senior citizens associations also accompanied GL members as required. Thirty-nine seniors have been interviewed from Kandivali, Lalbaug, Andheri. Seniors associated with Manav Seva Sangh have also been interviewed.

Graceful Living has also contacted other elder care organizations and police stations for reaching out to more seniors living on their own. Police stations have a list of seniors living alone in their jurisdiction and it is mandatory for constables to visit them once every two to three months just to check whether they are doing fine. The team has procured a list of seniors from Santacruz East police station already.

## GUEST LECTURE

Graceful Living hosted an online guest lecture (Zoom) by Dr Cyres Mehta, an ophthalmologist, who has performed over 2000 surgeries in eye care with the latest technology. He spoke about the robotic micro-incision laser cataract surgery in detail while also filling in details about eye care in general. Ms Asha gave a brief introduction of the resource person, and Ms Akanksha gave a vote of thanks. Participants came up with several queries which were resolved through a question/answer session; a total of 40 participants were present for the lecture.

## WEBINAR

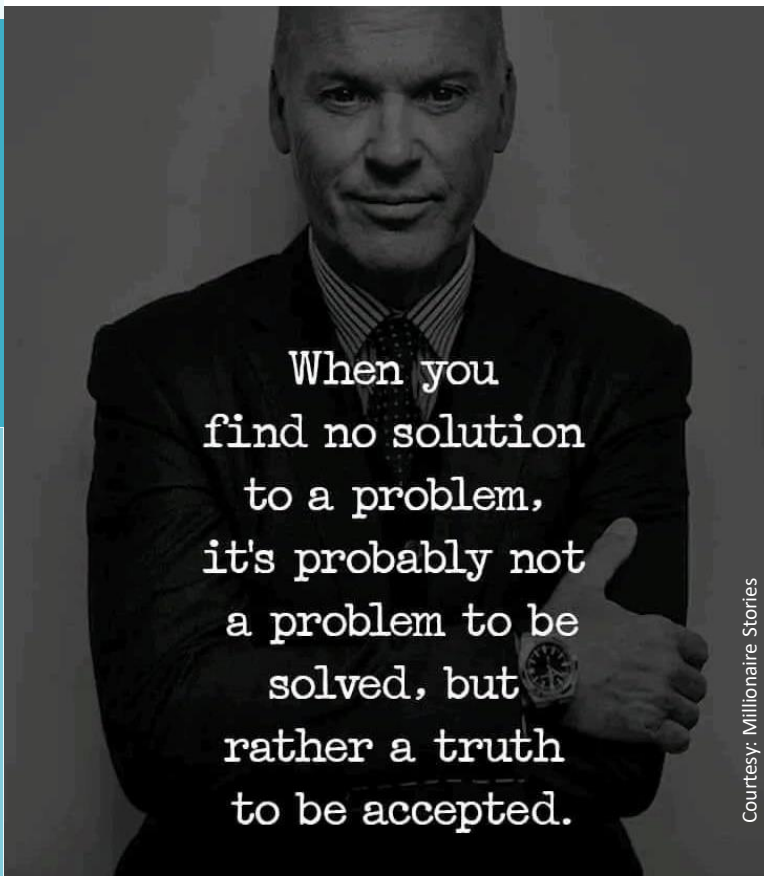
Graceful Living hosted an online webinar on the topic of 'Urinary Incontinence in Older Adults' on 25 February. This subject was discussed by professionals from different perspectives. But one common message stood out... Urinary Incontinence is not a normal part of ageing. The panelists included Dr Shailesh Raina (Urologist), Ms Maherra Desai (Clinical Psychologist), Dr Sudeshna Ray (Gynaecologist), and Dr N N Prem (Geriatrician). All the professionals stressed the fact that it was not a normal part of ageing. Around 50 seniors attended this webinar.



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## TESTIMONIALS...

- “ **Mr Davindar Singh, regular attendee, support group meetings.** The webinar on 'fall prevention in older adults' on January 28 this year was very well conducted by all the panelists. It was very useful for me, and I learned many new things from this meeting. Please conduct this type of a meeting every month; great for seniors.
- “ **Mr Manohar Jambotkar, regular attendee, support group meetings.** The meeting held on 15 December, 2022, on 'Successful Ageing' was informative and very relevant. Many questions were asked by the seniors about ageing. We enjoyed a lot in this session.
- “ **Ms Jyoti Devda, regular attendee, support group meetings.** Thank you, Dr Prem, for the very informative webinar on 25 February on urinary incontinence. Congratulations for the excellent work you are doing in the field of eldercare. My blessings and good wishes are with you. Keep me updated about your future webinars. God bless you.
- “ **Ms Rajashree Parab, financial advisor.** Lovely session. I attended the EHA service session online on Zoom. It was a very informative session. You are doing a great job in this field. Thank you GL for conducting these types of relevant sessions.
- “ **Ms Priyadarshani Nabar, Goregaon seniors association.** I attended the meeting on 'Successful Ageing' on February 22. I learned a lot from this new information. The clarity of the presentation was very good. It was a very relevant topic. It was also an encouraging session.



When you  
find no solution  
to a problem,  
it's probably not  
a problem to be  
solved, but  
rather a truth  
to be accepted.





## AGEING WITH DIGNITY AND GRACE

**Tulsi Trust** was established by the Chanrai family in 1975 with an aim to fulfil basic needs of the poor and needy. At a deeper level, it's more than indulging in physical activities. Health care, skills development and education are top priorities. It envisages a fair world for all, working with partners to improve health care and opportunities for livelihood, and education. Add to this, the capacity to understand another's needs and do this with utmost integrity.

**Graceful Living (GL)** is an arm of Tulsi Trust which came out of a realization of a social need for elderly care. After three active years, GL is now a recognized organization for those in their twilight years and has created an awareness through its activities and talks for senior citizens. GL has a social presence viz. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

## ACTIVITIES OF GRACEFUL LIVING

### In Partnership...

- Intellectual companionship and special care programs – includes companionship, counselling and care-giving for Dementia, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's when required. These services are provided through our partners:

#### Echoing Healthy Ageing

**Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorder Society (PDMDS)**

- Physiotherapy sessions which help the elderly to improve their mobility and become more independent:

**PRAJ-The Rehab Sphere** with Dr Pratha Mehta and Dr Rajshri Lad

- Training candidates in 'elder care' in order to have professionals for the same:

**MMP Shah College** – elder companionship course for Sociology students

**Aaji Care** – Geriatric counselling course for post-graduate Psychology students

- Activities for the elderly :

**My Safe Place:** online activity programs

**Mrs Manasi Golwalkar:** technology training

- Sensitization programs for school/college students to create an awareness of the needs and issues of the elderly.

### Direct Intervention by GL...

- Support Group Meetings
- Webinars (Mr Manoj Gursahani)
- Guest Lectures by professionals/experts – mainly on Zoom
- Graceful Living Monthly Newsletter carrying important information for the elderly plus articles by known doctors and other professionals
- Online interviews with senior achievers called 'Sitare'
- Co-ordination by GL to create platforms for senior citizen organizations in the city.



## VIEWPOINT

In this April issue, we have learned about a surprising conclusion ... that older people are happier than the younger lot. This according to a new study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, in which researchers analysed data collected from a random sample of 1,546 people from ages 21 to 99 in San Diego. The general impression is that old age is bad, sad and older people are usually depressed, grumpy and unhappy. How often have we heard people say, 'old age is a curse'. But the surveys have made different claims. It's true that the older lot are at a physical disadvantage because of aches and pains, and more cognitive impairment but... wait ...their mental health was way better according to the survey. People in their 20s and 30s reported having the highest levels of depression, anxiety and stress, plus the lowest levels of happiness, satisfaction and well-being. Older people, surprisingly, were the happiest.

A recent article in the *Hindustan Times* has more good news for the older generation. This too in our *amchi* Mumbai in a village of Kandivali (East). A group of volunteers have launched an enterprise called 'Main Hoon Na' for more than 1,100 seniors (the lonely ones). Services offered are from counselling to taking care of their medical needs. In this issue, Ms Amruta Lovekar has briefly mentioned about the problems of older women.

Testimonials are aplenty, all expressing gratitude for the presence of Graceful Living and its services. Our webinar on the topic of 'Urinary Incontinence in Older Adults' was held on 25 February. This subject was discussed by professionals. One common message stood out... Urinary Incontinence is not a normal part of ageing. Our guest speaker for the month was Dr Cyres Mehta, an ophthalmologist practicing in Mumbai, who has performed over 2000 surgeries in eye care with the latest technology. Other GL events of April have also been mentioned.

And now...an important message for mobile phone users. I was walking on the streets of Colaba with my mobile in hand. I got a call, so started talking. After completing my conversation, I continued staring at my phone trying to look for something. And hey presto! I didn't see the speed breaker ahead and the sudden elevation. I lost my balance. I fell headlong and was lying on the road writhing in pain. I got severely bruised but luckily no broken bones. And help came from all sides. Took me over a week to recover. Worst of all, I had to take that tetanus injection. Eek!

**Asha Gurnani Vohra**

Editor

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