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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



8 Health & Safety Tips for Elderly Living Alone

Living alone can be rewarding and peaceful but enjoying this freedom should not come at a heavy cost. Take these steps to keep yourself safe and live your life just the way you want...

1 Stay Physically Active

A senior person living alone should stay physically active as much as possible in order to protect yourself from injuries and ageing health conditions that can hamper your livelihood anytime. Eating a healthy diet with all necessary nutrients, exercising as per your capabilities, walking, taking proper medication etc. will keep you physically active and healthy and enable you to be self-sufficient to live alone.

2

Maintain the House

The house or apartment that the seniors live in alone should be properly secured. There should be proper fencing, all the entry doors and windows should be high on safety criteria, furniture should be properly arranged, and everything should be organized, the floor should never be slippery in order to avoid falls. If you cannot do this on your own, take help from a family member.

3

Install Alert System

Alert system for home security is a must for a senior person living alone. Even the smallest of their medical emergencies can become critical if not attended to and then there is constant concern of trespassers. An alert system with a panic button, instant contact settings provide support from authorities during emergencies. Having an alert system even if you don't use it is better than not having one when you critically need it.

4

Be Medically Prepared

Most seniors have deteriorating health conditions and suffer from at least one medical condition like diabetes, heart disease, respiratory problem, etc. Whatever medication they take, there should be plenty of it at any point of time, as running out of these medications is very risky. Along with that there should be availability of other regular medicines and first aid too. Contacts of a nearby hospital, emergency room or a doctor should also be kept handy.

5

Close Contact with Neighbours

Your neighbours are the ones who will reach you earlier than the rest in case you need help. As they are able to see your surroundings, they can notice strange happenings which may sometimes require attention of authorities. Also, you can use some company every now and then to prevent isolation. So, get to know your neighbours, try to keep in touch with them.

6

Routine Check of A to Z

There are so many safety measures that you've taken to keep enjoying your independent life, but your medicines may have expired, the batteries of your smoke alarm may have gone dead, your bathroom floor may have gone slippery over time. That's why it's important to get a routine check of every aspect of your home security. Maintain a list of those measures and give them a weekly or monthly check depending on the need.

7

Daily Check-in

Have a family member or a neighbour that you have good connection with, check in on you daily either physically or on phone. A one- or two-minute conversation will not take over your independence, you'll be enjoying it while still being safe.

8

Connect Online

Given the current events, there has been a significant increase in internet activity with self-quarantining and social distancing. For seniors, it is extremely important to stay engaged in the community, as well as keep in touch with family and old friends at such times.



PRACTISING SILENCE



Serena Franklin

Journalist

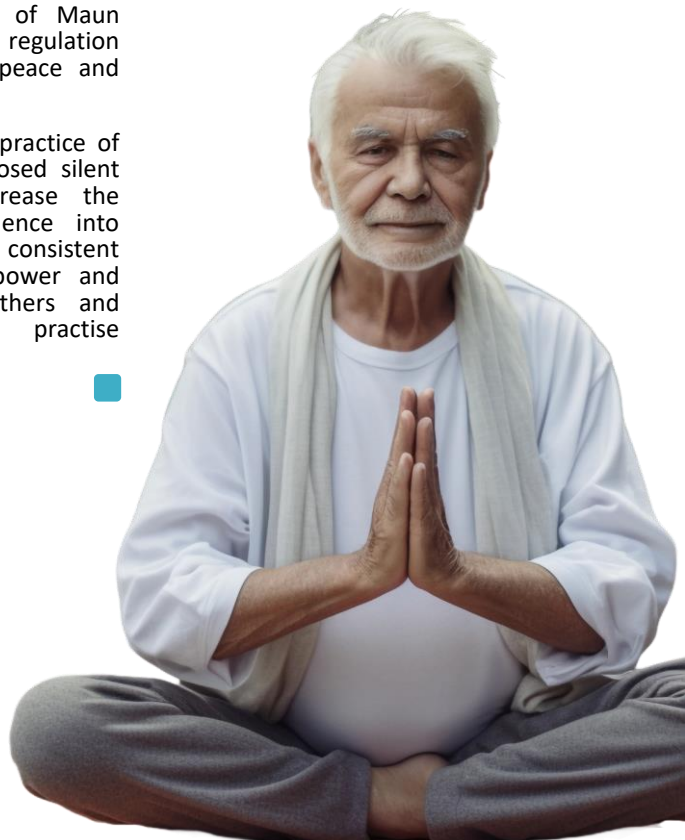
‘Maun’ is a penance that emphasizes international silence. It is a sacred practice of limiting one’s speech – a discipline through which spiritual experience can arise. It is characterized by the quietening of the mind and an increase in receptivity towards sound. Like calm waters reflecting truth, silence helps us to see things more clearly and we can have deeper connection with ourselves and those around us.

The Bhagwat Gita also highlights Maun as a spiritual austerity emphasizing both verbal and mental silence. Observing our thoughts without attachment gradually calms the restless mind leading to heightened awareness. There are various forms of Maun: Karna Maun: control of speech; Kasha Maun: maintaining a natural expression in every way; Susupti Maun: clearing the mind of doubts, recognizing life is transient and natural and the role of the three Gunas... Satva, Rajas and Tamas; and Maha Maun: achieving a complete cessation of thoughts.

When one masters this, one gains control over half of the mind’s distraction and

energy expenditure. Benefits of Maun include conservation of energy, regulation of emotions and promoting peace and clarity.

In the beginning, explore the practice of Maun through short, self-imposed silent periods; then gradually increase the duration and also bring silence into various activities. Through consistent practice, one’s words gain power and purpose, resonating with others and inspiring action. One can practise meditation to help this process.



UNWILLING TO CHANGE



Amruta Lovekar

Gerontologist &
Project Coordinator,
Graceful Living

Recently, I was travelling with one of my older relatives for a program. The Ola driver was about to take a turn and get into a lane a little further away as there was a small crowd in the front lane. But this older relative resisted and said that we needed to go from the that very lane only. I asked him the reason and he said it was the only lane he had taken all his life while travelling. It is generally seen that some older adults find it a little difficult to do things differently, adapt or adjust.

In psychology, rigidity or mental rigidity refers to an obstinate inability to yield or a refusal to appreciate another’s viewpoint or emotions. It is also the inability to change habits and modify concepts and attitudes once developed.

According to an article which came out in *Hindustan Times* in 2023, one of the reasons for rigidity in old age could be

deterioration in the brain circuit which could lead to a decline in behavioural flexibility.

But what are the psychological reasons which could lead to rigidity in old age? The first reason is the tendency to stick to the same routine. Humans are creatures of habit and but as seniors get older, routines become more rigid. Second is the increasing dependence on certainty. Certain outcomes might not be favourable which lead to inability to adapt when life throws lemons at us. The third is diminishing willingness to take risks. It’s not just physical risks but emotional risks too. Fourth is shrinking social circles which could also lead to anxiety and non-acceptance of new people in one’s lives. The fifth is resistance to new technologies. Generally, the resistance is not about the technology but one’s unwillingness to change or to step out of one’s comfort

zone. The sixth reason could be the intolerance to change. It is okay to have preferences and stick to them but any deviation from the norm becoming stressful is a cause for concern. The seventh and the last reason could be the unwillingness to self-reflect. **Important to note: No matter how old we get there is room to grow, to learn and to change.**

Considering all this, if we see ourselves manifesting these behaviours, there is no need to fret. The realisation itself is the first step towards growth, no matter our age. We need to make a conscious effort to expose ourselves to new experiences, perspectives and ideas. We need to take risks and embrace change rather than resist it. As The Buddha once said: ‘Most of the suffering in the world comes from wishing it were different’. Acceptance is one of the most important keys to what we cannot control.



IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

A good night's sleep is a must. But are we all able to get that 'sound sleep' as desired?

Earlier this year, on 23 March, Graceful Living organized a Zoom talk on Brain Health and Lifestyle by Dr. Joy Desai, a Neurologist, director and head, Neurology, Jaslok Hospital. Founder-Member of 'Sleep Associates' (an association which studies the sleep pattern and the quality of sleep), he captivated the audience with insights into optimizing cognitive well-being. He highlighted the pivotal role of quality sleep in nurturing brain health. Emphasizing the benefits of Rapid Eye Movement (REM) in sleep and its profound impact on memory consolidation, he elucidated strategies to cultivate a conducive sleep environment at home. Dr. Desai's expertise left a lasting impression, inspiring attendees to implement positive lifestyle changes for overall well-being.

Sleep is an important and involuntary process without which we cannot function effectively. It is as essential to our bodies as eating, drinking and breathing. And most importantly, it helps to repair and restore our brains, not just our bodies.

Sleep deficiency is linked to many chronic health problems, including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and more. It can cause some neurons in one's brain to malfunction. If the neurons cannot function properly it affects a person's behaviour and performance.

If sleep deprivation is mild, these simple strategies may help:

- Exercise at least 20 to 30 minutes each day, at least 5 to 6 hours before going to bed.
- Don't use substances that contain caffeine, nicotine, or alcohol before sleeping.

If deprivation is prolonged, long-term effects and complications such as listed below, are bound to occur:

Hypertension	Diabetes	Insulin Resistance
Sleep Apnea	Obesity	Heart Attack
Stroke	Depression	Anxiety

According to studies, the best treatment for sleep deprivation is also the easiest: **sleep more**. Sleep deprivation occurs when we do not sleep enough. Sleep that is of poor quality, such as that which may occur in sleep disorders like insomnia or sleep apnea, may also lead to sleep deprivation. You may not need a great deal of recovery sleep to feel better. After acute sleep loss, a single night of 8 hours of sleep may be sufficient. In the setting of chronic sleep deprivation, sleep during the night may need to be lengthened, and additional naps during the day might also help.

The next option to treat sleep deprivation is the opposite of sleep: **activity**. Brief periods of activity may help you to stay more alert, especially when you are experiencing minor sleep deprivation.

Research has shown that a five-minute walk can improve excessive daytime sleepiness as measured by multiple sleep latency testing (MSLT). Unfortunately, this increased alertness may be a transient benefit that comes and goes rather quickly.

However, if you are suffering from profound sleep deprivation, you may not find many benefits from being active. Depending on the level of activity, you may develop increased fatigue (as opposed to improved sleepiness) that may counteract the benefits of being more alert.

The exposure to **bright light** has important effects on your body's daily cycle. The circadian (daily) rhythm is a pattern of body functions, including sleep and wakefulness, that is timed to the day-night cycle. In addition, bright light may help you become more alert if you are sleep deprived. Some studies show that light is effective in shifting circadian rhythms, which might allow you to stay awake longer. In addition, certain research suggests there is improved performance at night, especially with shift work, when bright light conditions are present.

Noise - When we hear something, our brain responds by making us slightly more alert. This can be problematic when we have a noisy sleep environment, but it can be helpful if we are trying to stay awake. We generally respond best to novel stimuli. In other words, we tune out background noise when we are exposed to it for long enough. For example, the sound of air circulating through the ducts, the soft hum of a computer fan, or any number of other noises fade into the background after a while. New sounds, however, draw our attention.

Source Internet: By Dr. Brandon Peters, board-certified neurologist and sleep medicine specialist, is a fellow of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

GRACEFUL LIVING'S RECENT ACTIVITIES

Current Affairs Quiz in Senior Citizen Home

On 15 March, Graceful Living organised a quiz program at Shree Manav Seva Sangh Old Age Home, Sion. The quiz was on current affairs. Older adults eagerly engaged in the knowledge-based activities, showcasing enthusiasm and delight. As a gesture of recognition, G L awarded deserving participants, fostering a sense of appreciation and motivation among the seniors who expressed keen interest in future activities of a similar nature.

Dementia Awareness Workshop

On 19 March, a Dementia Awareness Session conducted by Dr. Janhavi Kedare at Parel Bhagini Mandal sparked insightful discussions on the nature, symptoms, causes, and differences between Dementia and Alzheimers. The seniors actively shared their experiences, while expressing eagerness to learn more about mental health issues in old age. The interactive session emphasised precautions and strategies to prevent Dementia, fostering a sense of awareness among participants.

Brain Gym Exercises

Graceful Living organized a workshop on Brain Gym Exercises on 20 March, at Jyeshtha Nagrik Sangh, Sanpada, highlighting the importance of such exercises for older adults. There is much demand among the elderly to learn these exercises aimed at enhancing blood circulation to the brain, reducing anxiety, and promoting mental well-being. The session emphasized the benefits of these exercises in maintaining equilibrium and managing stress, encouraging older adults to incorporate them into their daily routine for improved cognitive health.

Basic Mental Health Session

On 10 April, Graceful Living organised a basic mental health session at Kandivali Arya Chanakya Jeshta Mandal. This program was conducted by psychologists of the MPower team, Ms. Harshada Thatte and Ms. Pradnya Kannade who discussed the significance of mental health in our lives. They emphasised the importance of companionship. Seniors should be made to understand that seeking counselling is not a shame, their attitude towards it should be positive. The session was interactive, garnering positive feedback from participants.



8 Needs of the elderly

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, & 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 & 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
- Dignity Foundation** – Conducting sessions on issues related to ageing with its members of Chai-Masti-Centres
- Activities for the elderly :
Adv Supriya Rele: legal consultation
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 (Moderated by 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
- Co-ordination by GL to create platforms for senior citizen organizations in the city.



VIEWPOINT

The most dreaded month in Mumbai... the hottest month in the year. We open with the most required advice for seniors: 8 Health and Safety Tips for Seniors Living Alone. This article covers tips such as maintaining the home while keeping physically active, having all required medication within reach while not forgetting to install an alarm system, being in touch with your neighbour as well as close friends and family on a regular basis and keeping a routine check on the pitfalls (accident-prone areas) within your home. And your regular medical check-ups. Phew! Sounds like so much work. But it's necessary as keeping safe is a must. Our regular guest writer, Serena Franklin, a journalist, discusses the importance of 'Maum' – Silence. Amruta Lovekar has written an article about the unwillingness of the elderly to change, be it their habits, daily routine or behaviour patterns. That streak of stubbornness is part of growing old. But it is vital to note that no matter how old we get there is room to grow, to learn and to change.

A good night's sleep is so desirable, not only by senior citizens but by one and all. Even so with youngsters. With a good night's sleep, you are bound to awaken with a smile in the morning and the day does turn out good. Dr. Joy Desai, a Neurologist, highlighted the pivotal role of quality sleep in nurturing brain health in a recent Zoom talk organised by Graceful Living. O heavenly sleep! It helps to repair and restore our brains, not just our bodies.

Graceful Living's recent activities include a quiz program on current affairs at Shree Manav Seva Sangh Old Age Home, Sion amid much enthusiasm. A Dementia awareness program conducted by Dr. Janhavi Kedare at Parel Bhagini Mandal brought into focus the nature, symptoms, causes, and differences between Dementia and Alzheimers. G L also organised a basic mental health session at Kandivali Arya Chanakya Jeshta Mandal. This program was conducted by psychologists of the MPower team, Ms. Harshada Thatte and Ms. Pradnya Kannade who discussed the significance of mental health.

Food for thought: Most of us are so boring that we can't seem to enjoy the simple occasions/times in life. I watched the Ambedkar Day celebrations in Mumbai. The crowds were well organised, not disrupting traffic. They were so enthused with vigour and joy! They really know how to live life and dance away their blues.

Asha Gurnani Vohra
Editor

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