

Grief

By
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As a psychiatrist and a psychoanalyst, I am well versed in the theory and management of grief. However, it was a whole new perspective to experience it once again up close when I lost my best friend in his courageous battle against cancer. He died of the complications of chemotherapy, not of cancer, which was very sobering to me as a physician enchanted by the wonders of modern medicine. It has its limits!

I had known my friend Praveen for over 47 years since our days together at the Premedical St. Xavier's Science College in India. Then we did our psychiatric training together at the Oxford Program in England and migrated to USA to settle in Milwaukee and Chicago. He served his patients with distinction and honor for over thirty five years and was working till the day he was hospitalized in the same hospital where he had completed his morning sessions with patients before checking in for the complications of his chemotherapy.

Praveen was a self-professed workaholic. As a friend and an analyst, I would counsel him often on virtues of life-work balance and he would always promise me that soon things would be different. However, they never were. I had given up on trying changing him. He would work very long hours. It was not about money or success. He was beyond such trivial pursuits. He just enjoyed his work. His was an imbalanced life. He died with his boots on, just the way he wanted it.

As I reflect on my grief and my friend's journey, I wonder if he got it right and I got it wrong. He would argue that a balanced life is a boring life. He enjoyed his engagement with his patients and his community of peers. They were the beneficiaries of his workaholic commitment to them. He made a difference in many lives. This is the way of Karma Yoga; a life lived to serve the family, community and the God of our understanding. While a well-balanced life is optimal to promote personal health and wholeness, an ostensibly lopsided life that serves others benefits the humanity and the expense of the individual well-being. Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa and many old souls we admire lived lop-sided lives that put community welfare over personal well-being. But what a magnificent imbalance which has such a profound impact on lives it touches.

Praveen taught me a whole new respect for the imbalanced life. Now I have a new

appreciation for my workaholic mentors and teachers, my own physician and my peers and to respect my own workaholic shadow. There is a lot of light in such a shadow. While personal well-being and balance are desirable goals, there is much virtue in lives that chose service over balance. This insight was the farewell gift of my friend to me. His legacy will persist in his son who is in Medical School in Chicago.

Grief is like the footprint of a lived life in the sands of memories of those who survive the loss. Like the departed, the sands of our life will also merge on the sandy shores of the ocean of time. But the time will carry the memory of a well lived life in service to others.

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Trained in India, Great Britain and the US, he is interested in the emerging frontiers of Spirituality and Healing and the synapses of the Mind, Body, Soul and Spirit. He is author of the book, Path to the Soul, Weiser Books, 2000, Awaken the Slumbering Goddess: The Latent Code of the Hindu Goddess Archetypes, Booksurge Publishers, 2007 and the coauthor of Retire Your Family Karma, Nicholas-Hays, Inc. 2003, These and his other upcoming presentations can be previewed at his website www.pathtothesoul.com

Ashok Bedi has been in practice in Milwaukee for over twenty- five years and specializes in Adult Psychotherapy and Jungian Psychoanalysis. He regularly presents lectures and seminars in India, Great Britain, Ireland and USA on the topic of the Spiritual and analytic dimensions of treatment, healing and personal growth. Over the last several years, he has been the International Association of Analytical Psychologists liaison person for developing Jungian training programs in India and travels annually to India to teach, train the consult with the Jungian Developing groups at several centers in India including Ahmedabad &, Bangalore. He leads the annual “In the Footsteps of Carl Jung in India” study group to several centers in India under the auspices of the New York Jung Foundation.



Seventh Chakra