

Take Care of Your Body, It's the Only Place You Have to Live

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“Take care of your body, it's the only place you have to live.” This saying is now engraved in my heart. I've heard it before but I never truly knew what loss of life is and how much it affects everyone around me. I learned this lesson just last year, upon the passing away of my mom's cousin.

He was my mom's cousin. His family are small farmers in a remote village in India. With limited income in the family, he made best use of resources, studied hard, went to a good college and found a decent job. He got married; and had a small wedding. Though he started making a decent income, he had to spend most of his savings repairing their old house which has been falling apart for many years. Around this time, he developed symptoms of high blood pressure. To avoid his family from getting worried, he never disclosed the seriousness of his health issues. His condition continued to worsen as he stayed focused on working for his family.

One day, his dad got a call from the hospital emergency that his son was hospitalized. Upon brain scans, the doctors reported that sustained blood pressure damaged his blood vessels leading to brain damage. His family was feverishly reaching out to everyone and trying to figure out the best options for him. They were crying, and conversing with my mother in Hindi. I really wished that I had learned Hindi so I could understand what they were saying. But all I could do was wait for the verdict.

The doctor finally called and said, “I'm sorry. I don't think he will make it.” All of the family members had to exchange their tearful goodbyes. He died in the next 3 hours.

The whole family was devastated. The father kept repeating inconsolably in Hindi, “My son was everything to me, what am I going to do.” His wife is now widowed at the age 24. His sisters are still young and dependent on him.

We followed the story from our secluded place in America. We called day and night, consoling the family. I have small memories of the cousin himself, and he was always smiling, even though he worked so hard. His loss has left a big hole in our family. Everyone is always saying, “If he had just told us about his declining health conditions, we could have saved him.” He knew he was sick, but he didn't want to worry his family. His life was precious to all of us. And now, he lost it. This incident will now forever remind me to “Take care of your body, it's the only place you have to live” because his death has impacted me as if it was my own. It is a reawakening for my self-care ideals, our family's self-care, and our realization that this life can be taken away from us so much quicker than it was given.