



Alzheimer's: A Blessing or a Curse?

By Hillary Schneider

Time, it is our master in our lives. We plan, we worry and we scheme all to follow this thing called time. We are slaves to its power as our lives are a constant race against the clock. What is this thing called time? Time is an illusion; time is our way to try to control our lives. The truth is if we lived in the moment, if each day we just simply were with what is now, time would no longer control us, we would become the master of our own lives. The present is a gift and to those who know that are the lucky among us - they have truly come to know the true essence of this life.

I was reading a book on wealth consciousness and the first thing the author wrote was about time. How to just be in the moment is the key to living a present life. A life here in the now is a life of freedom, a life of wealth, and a life of joy. This concept is not new - it is one that has been preached by many but on this particular day it hit a note inside of me. It reached a deep place and gifted me a new perspective on the disease called Alzheimer's.

It was a year and a half ago that my grandfather was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. To know the impact of this disease on him and our family is to know who he was as a human being. He is the patriarch of our family. He was the one who took care of the family in all ways, making sure we were always ok. He was a businessman owning his own steel company and someone who needed to be in absolute control of every detail at every moment. He was constantly worrying about the future and making sure that his family would always be provided for. Suddenly this man of total control (to the point of tyranny) was overcome by a disease that takes over the mind.

As the months progressed so too did his mind. People would say “what a shame it was for him being so physically healthy and once so with it to be literally losing his mind”. For me I began to see a different perspective. I began to see a man that started to enjoy life a little more. He became more of trickster and more mellow. He became a man that seemed to enjoy what life had to offer him in that moment.

They say that Alzheimer's is harder for the family than the one going through it. Having to personally go through this process with him I completely agree with this statement. I have lost the grandfather, the man I have known my whole life and I have gone through my grief with that. But the silver lining is that I see what a blessing this is for him and I see how each moment I have with him is a gift unto itself.

In a world in which we are all slaves to time, I look at my grandfather and I see that he is the lucky one. This disease is a gift, a blessing in disguise. All he knows is this moment. All he can think about is right now. Each moment he is fully present to it - for that is all he has now. As I observe how he goes through his process - his journey - I can't help but feel gratitude and a bit of envy for how he is now living his life. I look at him and I do not see a man suffering from a disease but I see a man who is now able to rest and enjoy the life that he has been given. To me that is a blessing.