

Driving Youthful Passion to Elderly Care

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Never before in history of the world the human kind will face a challenge that goes deeper than what we are even able to appreciate and comprehend. It is estimated that the number of elderly persons presently alive surpass the cumulative number of all elderly persons throughout preceding human history. In an age, where the world leaders' collective are attempting to shape sustainable development, the attempt will fail if the young are not involved to care for the elderly. Globalisation, urban development and modern values, have led to change in the economic framework, decline in the social beliefs, fading social roles and destabilising organisations like joint family.

Family bond is shrinking in the amplifying digital era. The traditional culture of obligation and responsibility towards elders in the family is being wrinkled. Senior citizens' homes are mushrooming because of rapidly deteriorating family values and conflicting priorities. The moral duty of securing the safety of elderly no longer exist.

Old age depicts reduction in physical and mental ability, gradual withdrawal of social roles and economic actions. This displays a shift in economic status from independence to dependence upon other's for support. The elderly should come to understand this changing world more deeply and with them, the youth

should be able to respect ageing and be more compassionate. Empathy is a forgotten by-word for today's young who are far less emotional, detached from what it means to love and who are guided only by materialistic pursuits and pleasure. It is their duty to ensure that their elders don't spend their gloaming years of life in isolation, depression, pain and hardships.

Youth will need to adapt and be oriented to respect ageing so that it will further enable the elders to live a healthy and fulfilling life, longer. Life expectancy has increased beyond doubt and more people live to be old. Whether more people who live to be old, live to be healthy calls for introspection, reflection and action. Youth as stakeholders towards creating healthier nation states and who are policy makers by far, need to be directed towards ageing and sustainable development.

The older population globally is currently growing at a faster rate of 1.9% per annum as compared to 1.2% per annum of the total population. Older people depend to a great extent on social security, on psychological well-being and seek help from others. It becomes imperative for the young to be sensitised and be made more humane. It remains by far a matter of universal enlightened self-interest that we all will age, but the matter of fact is how do we secure ourselves gracefully while ageing and maintain optimum health.

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The time has arrived to build age friendly environment through collective action and shared understanding

Youth should be encouraged and motivated to serve the aged by the purest of intentions. WHO European Review of Social Determinants and the Health Divide (2013) used the phrase "do something, do more, do better." By this it meant that, where there is little strategy action on Social Determinants of Health, do something and where there is action happening, do more and where policies and interventions exist, do better. WHO provides an excellent example for encouraging youth in this direction. It's time that the youth gets involved to consider and thereby implement the necessary adaptive and restorative changes that can contribute to psychosocial growth of the society.

Youth can be trained as a resource to churn in financial support to the elderly, so that it does not remain a barrier for them. Health promotion activities in the form of social plays, debates and dialogues at a community level driven by the youth will help the aged maintain optimum health in many ways. Community activities like gardening, sports, indoor games, music, art and craft can be promoted by the means of establishing senior citizen clubs, laughter groups, recreation and exercise groups that can foster socialisation and thereby reduce the impact of isolation and depression. Care often depends upon emotional attachment that family members develop by years of living together and through their experiences with inter-generational dialogues, existing resources and societal preparations. This very inter-generational relationship can

influence and have a bearing on the youth to care for the elderly.

The youth can engage the elderly by involving them for computer and video games and by teaching them how to play them. Social games on a regular basis can be done also. Debates on issues of social relevance can be organised where they feel their voices are heard and valued. For those who like reading, book reviews can be discussed and for those who like movies, movie reviews can be done. Weekly a movie should be shown to the elderly so that it changes the mind to a great extent. Light instrumental music for music lovers will go a long way in stabilising the mind.

Youth clubs, National Service Schemes, home help services can all integrate their efforts to reduce the burden of elderly care, especially due to lack of political will to address the needs of the elderly as a priority. The time has arrived to build age friendly environment through collective action and shared understanding. The cornerstone of doing this simply lies by engaging youth work-force to mobilize and create a better lifestyle for their elders. Little has been done to address the diverse needs, life circumstances and functional trajectories. At a policy level, it's a herculean attempt waiting to be made. This will call for a revision in health insurance schemes, social security options, revision on the existing policy and deeper sensitisation on the issue at hand. Let us plan for inclusion ageing which we all will inevitably meet one day.