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Horizons

Importance of Care and Support for Well-Being



In India which still has strong reliance on family support, care comes from parents and immediate family members which is a great relief in times of distress.

Personal and professional care and support are necessary vitamins for growth. Increasingly, given the flat nature of the world and ever-increasing competition not only within the borders of a nation, but from across the world, support networks have become vital. Ever-growing struggles among nations for resources, as is happening currently in some parts of the world, are creating stresses in multiple ways. Economic pressure is leading to unemployment in developing and populous countries like China. Mental health issues in families and college students and political instability add to the pressures. All these factors demand care and

supportive schemes from the government, non-governmental agencies, society at large, and of course families. Due credit must be given to relief and support groups such as the United Nations Refugee Agency and Doctors without Borders to name a few. “Irrespective of the complexity of the world or fast paced lifestyle, empathy needs to be part of all of us. At the end of the day, we are human beings, and hence caring for others is a basic characteristic that prevails in each one of us. But due to the needs of time and many inhibitions, we are not expressing it in many required situations,” stated Dr. Raeshmi Ramalingam, Pediatrician and CEO of Salem-based Ramalingam Hospital.



Dr. Raeshmi Ramalingam

Agreeing with the above sentiment, Lubbock-based Marissa Thomassen, a disabled person who has worked in the IT sector acknowledging the care she is receiving from the society, stated, “empathy has a role in this world with full of complex situations.” “Empathy allows people to think outside themselves, which in turn solves problems that they would not think about in their own lives; specially If they have not faced adversity in their own lives,” added Thomassen.

Support Network In countries like India, which still has strong reliance on family support, care comes from parents and immediate family members whereas in countries where such family network is not strong anymore, care needs to come from outside agencies. In such circumstances, religious, cultural, and social organizations in the likes of soup kitchens, meals on wheels, food banks and Salvation Army etc., fill in the voids due to lack of extended family support. Governments also play a role in countries such as Europe and Canada where safety nets such as social security and Medicare are available. In the United States, the support programs need to be strengthened. The feeling that someone cares is a confidence and morale booster. Little acts of care can go a long way in children’s growth, general and mental health improvements in adult population, and societal well-being. It is important for society to know about the benefits of care, caregivers and those who can and receive care. Therefore, it is an important task for care receivers and providers to engage in better outreach. This will also motivate others so that charitable deeds can be replicated.

Witnessing Care and Lessons Learned

We all witness and receive care daily. Simple acts go a long way in helping those in need and distress. In recent years, in my own life, I am blessed to have witnessed care both in personal and professional settings. Last year has been a difficult year with a family member having serious medical issues. While we were able to provide best possible medical care, the support and care received daily from Dr. Manickavasagam Sundaram of Oshawa, Canada is commendable. Dr. Sundaram is a physician practicing in Canada who is known to go out of the way to take care of people in medical distress. Dr. Sundaram called daily from Canada and guided

through the medical care and gave comfort. This act during a time of need helped us to sail through the toughest times and his act stands as a testimony to the medical oath taken by medical practitioners. Every family would have witnessed such scenarios, and they serve as lessons for us to contribute to the welfare of our society.

Customer Care: A Business Model

We witness care from medical and family corners, which is a norm. However, in business and professional environments, care takes different shapes and forms and can have positive and long-standing effects. In marketing, advertising campaigns emphasize how businesses offer special customer care. Observing the advertisements and marketing tactics serves as lessons to instill in us care giving methods. Here again, I had an interesting learning experience recently while I took my car for annual inspection. Automotive body shops due to fierce competition use attractive marketing slogans and campaigns to win loyal customers. Many claim they accomplish oil change within 10-minutes while the automobile owner sits in their vehicle. The shop where I went to undertake my vehicle checkup in Lubbock, Texas was busy and hence, I had to wait a while. After the vehicle inspection when I was about to pay, the technician although not the owner of the shop stated, the payment has been taken care and I do not owe the auto shop anything. I was impressed with customer care and understood that this has been the policy in some customer centric organizations to win loyalty. Such thoughtful acts get etched in us and build customer loyalty and goodwill.

Learning by Experience

The Human resources department have realized the need for support and onboarding to enhance collegiality and productivity. Many businesses organize workshops and short-term programs on stress management. Invariably in these workshops the importance of care and support groups are stressed. People can learn by example, not just by words alone, particularly in areas such as care giving opined Marissa Thomassen. Caring for each other should be inculcated in the minds of young children. "While there are no formal courses in many curriculums, going forward, schools can bring attention to such matters in PTA meetings and request the parents and the society to teach kids wherever and whenever possible," opined Dr. Raeshmi Ramalingam.

Speaking from her experience, Marissa Thomassen stated, "I started in high school working with special needs students and it helped me realize that all people have something to offer both strong and weak points, and no one is the same. So, with that knowledge, I learnt that we all must be adaptive."

Receiving and Giving are Important Lessons

People who have been at the receiving end realize the importance of support networks. Such an experience needs to translate into actions that benefit others. One can associate with hospital systems, charities and NGOs and volunteer in the best way possible. In the United States, in admission process to medical and allied fields, volunteering and leadership qualities are important admission benchmarks. Students right from 9th grade engage in some form of care giving activities, which build overall personality. Engaging with people who need care brings a greater understanding of suffering and enables us to know life is not always a bed of roses. Marissa Thomassen's life is a good example of courage, empathy, and service to others. "As a deaf person I must take my current abilities and apply them to show people that I can serve and still have values that can be helpful to others," stated Thomassen.

To sum up, while the world is advancing technologically, there is also a growing need for care giving and support networks. We should endeavor our best to engage ourselves in volunteer efforts and be of service. "Empathy brings selflessness, which the world is lacking to say the least," advises Marissa Thomassen.

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