

This is a monthly diary giving updates on activities at Graceful Living and providing information on ageing 'gracefully' to help elders live a life with maximum ease



GRACEFUL LIVING

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Everything You Need To Know About LIVING WILLS

The question of a Living Will has become essential as often life is prolonged in hospitals to save the patient at any cost. Health rights activist Dr Nikhil Datar demystifies the crucial legal document, explaining why everyone should have one regardless of age

With PD Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre in Mahim launching a first-of-its-kind Living Will Clinic to help patients make decisions over future healthcare decisions, *Mid-day* spoke to Dr Nikhil Datar, renowned gynaecologist and health rights activist, whose public interest litigation (PIL) in the Bombay High Court highlighted the importance of living wills.

The court ruling from February 2023, the Supreme Court directed the state government to set up a web portal for living wills before August 16, the day when the four-month timeline would come to an end. Meanwhile, P D Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre in Mahim launched a first-of-its-kind living will clinic to help patients make decisions over future healthcare decisions.

The Flashback

On April 17, 2025, the High Court, in response to Dr Datar's PIL, ordered the state government to create a rule to set up the process of a living will. The state was given time until August 16, 2025, to do so.

Dr Datar urged in his PIL that the state government be directed to implement the Supreme Court guidelines on end-of-life care, which remained unaddressed. The petition criticised the outdated method of care decisions in hospitals, which doesn't permit withdrawal of life support otherwise.

In response, which was agreed upon from the date of filing the PIL, the state issued a GR appointing 413 officers as custodians in 413 medical institutions across the state to do so. The petitioner also urged the state for a web-based living will registration system, but the government has only appointed two custodians for Mumbai.

However, Dr Datar, who had also filed a contempt petition in the High Court, said, "The state government struggled to create the web-based online system. Hence, we had to approach the court to expedite the directives."



Experts from the field

What is a living will or advance directive?

It is a legal document where a person expresses his or her medical treatment wishes in case of terminal illness or an irreversible condition. Doctors and family members can then follow instructions on whether to continue or stop treatment, especially if there is no chance for meaningful recovery. This avoids confusion or disagreement when the person's wishes are unclear.

How is a living will different from a will and testament?

A will and testament is about how a person's assets and property should be distributed after death. In contrast, a living will is about instructions for future medical decisions in situations where the person becomes incapacitated.

Why would someone need a living will?

"In today's world, where medical technology can sometimes prolong life artificially, it can be difficult to know whether treatment is helping or simply delaying death. This can lead to unnecessary suffering, loss of dignity, emotional distress for loved ones, and high medical costs," says Dr Nikhil Datar, gynaecologist and health rights activist.

Who should have a living will?

Ideally, every human being should have a living will, regardless of age. However, it becomes especially important for middle-aged or older individuals and those with chronic or terminal illness. Starting to think about advance planning while still healthy can ensure better medical care choices if ever incapacitated.

What should a living will include?

A living will should clearly outline whether to continue or refuse aids such as ventilators, dialysis, or feeding tubes. It may include being kept on feeding tubes or saline, but refuse intubation and ventilation. It can also include organ donation and DNR (do not resuscitate) orders for reference. Since it is focused on individual decisions, individuals must choose who becomes the decision-maker about healthcare, the names of relatives or friends (executors) who'll decide for them.

Who should have a copy of the living will?

The person who creates a living will should keep it safe. Copies should also be given to family members or close friends, a family physician, your insurance provider or trusted healthcare worker. This copy may be handed to the hospital or any individual appointed to take care of your medical decisions. Each custodian should be reliable and able to verify the document.

Should I carry a card or note indicating I have a living will?

Although the Supreme Court has not said anything about such cards, carrying a living will card is always a good idea. In case of an accident, emergency, or health crisis, a card mentioning that a living will was made can help doctors and nurses. But it's important to clearly name the custodian and the facility. You can get your living will executed at one of the hospitals with an appointed officer or custodian. Once the state government starts the online portal, which is now much delayed, the custodian should be able to upload and access the document easily. Until that happens, the web portal is very important.

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We have taken the liberty to publish this article which appeared in the *Mid-day* recently. We are grateful for this information as it is a burning issue among seniors.

WHY SLEEP IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOOD OR WATER?

Did you know your brain values sleep more than food and water??

While we often prioritize diet and hydration, sleep deprivation can cause catastrophic effects on the body and brain far faster than starvation or dehydration.

The longest recorded time a human has survived without sleep is just 11 days, as documented during a 1964 experiment by Randy Gardner. By the end, his cognitive functions were severely impaired, showing signs of hallucinations, memory loss, and paranoia. In contrast, the human body can survive up to 60-100 days without food (as demonstrated by Jain Maharasahebs) and 3-7 days without water, depending on conditions. Last year, one monk even did a 180-day Nirjala Upvas (fast without water). Sleep deprivation, however, can lead to death within just a few days in extreme cases.

Why is sleep so critical? During deep sleep, the brain's glymphatic system activates, flushing out toxic waste like beta-amyloid, a protein linked to Alzheimer's disease. Without sleep, these toxins accumulate, accelerating cognitive decline. Additionally, sleep is vital for consolidating memories, regulating emotions, and restoring the body's immune system. Chronic sleep deprivation increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and mental health disorders.

Unlike hunger or thirst, your body cannot "power through" prolonged sleep deprivation. Lack of sleep directly impairs the brain's ability to function, akin to a computer overheating without cooling.

If you've been cutting corners on sleep, think again. Your brain—and your life—depend on it. Sleep isn't just rest; it's survival as well as your future brain health!

Learn to Live Brain Healthy!

-Dr. Shraddha Shah

Dr. Shah is a Neuro-psychologist with formal training in Neuroscience (New York). She is the co-founder of Synapsium Brain Health Care.



A New You as You Age



*With age... your eyes may stop seeing up close,
and your ears may miss the distant sounds.
You sleep fewer hours, you walk a little slower
But something beautiful begins to happen.*

*You start loving yourself a little more.
You carry fewer regrets.
And you begin to chase your own happiness—
without apology.*

*You become selective with your circle.
Only the real ones remain.
You stop searching for answers you already
carry inside, and you no longer need unsolicited
advice.*

*You don't greet those who never greeted you.
And you no longer waste energy arguing with
people who don't know how to listen.*

*With the years, you realize:
There's only one life—and it's far too precious
to live in fear.*

*So you slow down.
You savor the little moments.
You embrace your wrinkles.
And you stop giving the mirror the power to
define your worth.*

Because growing older isn't about fading.

It's about finally shining—on your own terms.



— Richard Gere

*A famous Hollywood star
known for his stellar role
in 'Pretty Woman'*

WE ARE IN A LONELINESS EPIDEMIC

*In today's scenario, people have never been more connected. It's Whatsapp, Instagram and Facebook that makes a buzz around us. BUT we have never been **more lonely***

And the irony is, we've never been **more connected**. Group chats light up every evening. Emojis substitute affection. Instagram tells you who's getting married, who's gone abroad, who's making reels about growth. But no one tells you they cried in the shower. No one tells you they sat at dinner in silence for the fifth night in a row.

Loneliness doesn't always look like isolation. In India, it often looks like a ritual. You show up for Diwali dinners. You wear the kurta. You pose for the photo. You smile. But inside, something is missing. We were never built for this much distance.

For centuries, India functioned as a web of closeness. Families lived under one roof, not out of compulsion but culture. Your neighbors knew your name. You shared dahi. You shared grief. You fought over mangoes. You borrowed sugar. You didn't need to ask, "Can I come over?" You just did. But then came the upgrade.

We moved into better houses. Bigger salaries. Smaller lives. The kids who once played gully cricket now swipe through reels. The women who once shared evening tea now compare Amazon deals. The men who once sat together reading

newspapers now forward news they don't read. **We replaced intimacy with information**. Now everyone knows where you are. But no one knows how you are. **We are lonely not because we lack people, but because we've stopped showing our hearts.**

I see it when friends text me "All good" and then confess breakdowns at 2 a.m. I see it in people who work late, not because they love the job, but because going home feels emptier. I see it in fathers who haven't hugged their sons in years. In daughters who fake laughter so their mothers won't worry.

Even in love, loneliness hides. You live with someone. Share a bed. But the silence grows. The touch fades. The conversations reduce to logistics. "Did you pay the bill?"

Are we going to your cousin's wedding?" "Did you order groceries?"

You forget to ask, "How's your heart?"

We are raising a generation that knows how to hustle, but not how to hold each other. And when someone breaks - as they inevitably do - we send them a



playlist. A meme. A quote. But we forget the oldest Indian tradition - sitting. Just sitting. With someone. In silence. Without answers. Without fixing. Just presence.

We don't need more content. We need more company.

The next time you feel alone, pause. Don't scroll. Don't perform. Call someone. Ask nothing. Just stay.

And the next time someone says, "I'm just tired."

Listen carefully. Because tired often means - I miss being seen.

*This whatsapp has been doing the rounds recently and is very well lauded. And so, so true. Thank you **Shashank Sharma** (he is the writer of this message). We are using our Newsletter to spread your message.*

RECENT ACTIVITIES OF GRACEFUL LIVING

PHYSICAL MEETINGS

- On 8th July 2025 / Music Therapy. A participative session was held at Samvaad Jyeshth Nagrik Mandal, Mahim, led by Mr. Kishor Golatkar. The seniors explored how music can support emotional well-being. Attendance: 19
- On 10th July 2025 / Music Therapy. Mr. Kishor Golatkar conducted an interactive music session at Mithanagar, Mulund. Participants appreciated the therapeutic use of music in daily life. Attendance: 18
- On 18th July 2025 / Jaslok Support Group Meeting. Graceful Living organized a session on "Memory Loss in Old Age" at Jaslok, conducted by Counsellor Ms. Ruchi Jain. It ended on a joyful note with laughter therapy by Ms. Viju Chavan. Attendance: 40
- On 25th July 2025 / First Mental Health Screening. Graceful Living and MPower Foundation conducted a mental health screening for Nana Nani Khushiyaan and Stree Mandal members; 18 seniors were screened, with three requiring further psychological support. Attendance: 18 screened

ONLINE MEETING

- On 10th July 2025 / Online Tech Session on Ola/Uber. An informative online session was conducted by intern Mr. Jaskaran Panjetta, guiding seniors on using Ola/Uber apps for booking, payment, and general app usage. Attendance: 11

WEBINAR

- On 30th July 2025, Graceful Living hosted a Webinar featuring speakers from Maya Care, Mitram, and a dedicated volunteer. Seniors learned about available companionship services and showed interest in spreading the word. Attendance: 30

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AGEING WITH DIGNITY AND GRACE

Tulsi Trust was established by the Chanrai family in 1975 with an aim to fulfil basic needs of the poor and needy. At a deeper level, it's more than indulging in physical activities. Health care, skills development and education are top priorities. It envisages a fair world for all, working with partners to improve health care and opportunities for livelihood, & education. Add to this, the capacity to understand another's needs and do this with utmost integrity.

Graceful Living (GL) is an arm of Tulsi Trust which came out of a realization of a social need for elderly care. After three active years, GL is now a recognized organization for those in their twilight years and has created an awareness through its activities and talks for senior citizens. GL has a social presence viz. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY GRACEFUL LIVING

COUNSELLING & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Mpower
- Dr. Mamta Kakade
- Echoing Healthy Ageing

COMPANIONSHIP SERVICES

- MayaCare Foundation

PHYSIOTHERAPY

- Praj- The Rehab Centre
- Dr. Pooja Gindra
- Dr. Alfiya Shaikh

TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

- Simpli5 - Mr. Salil Datar
- Mrs. Mansi Golwalkar
- Ms. Sakshi Kadam

ELDER COMPANIONSHIP COURSE AT MMP SHAH COLLEGE

YOUTH SENSITIZATION PROGRAMS & INTER-GENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

- Conducted by Senior Citizens' Volunteers trained by Graceful Living

DIRECT INTERVENTION BY GL...

- Webinars – alternate month
- Guest Lectures by professionals/experts – mainly on Zoom
- Graceful Living Monthly Newsletter carrying important information for the elderly plus articles by known doctors and other professionals
- Co-ordination by GL to create platforms for senior citizen organizations in the city



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THE BUTTERFLY

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day, a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly as it struggled to force its body through the little hole. Then it seemed to stop making progress. It appeared as though it had gotten as far as it could, and it could go no further. So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped them off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily, but it had a swollen body and small shrivelled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened. In fact the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shrivelled wings it was never able to fly.

What the man in kindness and haste, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggles required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening was nature's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our lives. If we were allowed to go through life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. We could never fly.

I ASKED FOR STRENGTH...I was given difficulties to make me strong
I ASKED FOR WISDOM...I was given problems to solve
I ASKED FOR PROSPERITY...I was given a brain and brawn to work
I ASKED FOR COURAGE...I was given danger to overcome
I ASKED FOR LOVE...I was given troubled people to help
I ASKED FOR FAVOURS...I was given opportunities
I RECEIVED NOTHING I WANTED...I received everything I needed

(Adapted from the Michigan 4-H Youth Development at Michigan State University).

VIEWPOINT

So here we are, in September, with a change of seasons. For Mumbai people, it's back to heat (was it any different?) This month Graceful Living brings a Cover Story for the young and old alike. Today falling ill is possible at all ages. And hospital care becomes essential. And then... when it comes to irreversible illness, can we finally have a right over our own bodies? 'Everything you need to know about LIVING WILLS'. We have taken the liberty to publish this article which appeared in the *Mid-day* recently. We are grateful for this information as it is a burning issue among seniors. Thank you Vinod Kumar Menon.

Is sleep really more important than food and water? Yes, says Dr. Shradha Shah, a Neuro-psychologist. According to her, sleep deprivation can cause catastrophic effects on the body and brain far quicker than starvation or dehydration. There's only one life—and it's far too precious to live in fear, says Richard Gere, the Hollywood heart-throb of millions. Old age is not about fading, but finally shining on your own terms.

Despite so much communication available in the media, we are still living solitary lives. The next time you feel alone, pause. Don't scroll. Call someone. Ask nothing. Just stay. And listen.

Our recent events have also been listed. Explaining through a story of a butterfly; regard patience as a virtue. We have explained about life's struggles which are exactly what we need to understand in our lives. If we were allowed to go through life without any obstacles, it would cripple us.

Life's Lessons: There are lessons to be learned at every stage in life. If we choose to pay attention in our younger years, benefits would reap bountiful. START NOW. Eat healthy, sleep well, and don't let the body give in to laziness. Years later you will witness the fruits of your actions.

Asha Gurnani Vohra
Editor