Happiness

Warring Khushwinder, 59, an engineer and a member of the Sikh faith, lives in Orangevale, California. He had multiple myeloma.

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I was pretty active in 2018. I have been married since 1987 and have been an engineer for 30 years. We have a daughter who is a doctor and a son who is an engineer. I am Sikh, and we have a huge faith.

One day, I was cleaning the pool and felt pain on my rib. I let it go, but the next day, it was so bad I couldn't stand up, couldn't walk. At the emergency room, they found a bone lesion on a rib with a CT scan. Even with painkillers, I couldn't sleep.

I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. At the University of California, Davis, I had radiation and five three-week cycles of chemotherapy. I was strong, but by the fifth cycle, my feet were burning. I was weak. We finished that cycle; the results were good.

But when I came home, as the medication wore off, I started getting a lot more burning pain on the bottom of my feet. I was screaming, crying, all day. I went to see David Copenhaver, MD, who runs the cancer pain program. I was in a wheelchair. He prescribed non-opioid painkillers, a partial opioid, oral ketamine and an antidepressant that works for pain. It was an amazing thing. My pain was reduced significantly. I felt so good. I was able to sleep that night.

That summer, I wanted to visit the Golden Temple in Amritsar in India with my daughter and her fiancé. I have been going every two years. When I visit the temple, I feel the good aura, being around good people.

But at times, I am not able to put my feet on a hot or cold floor. The temple has a round floor made of marble. You have to go barefoot. I was praying about it, worried about it. But I was strong with my faith, and, with pain medications, I did it.

My pain medications have been adjusted down, but I still need them. I have side effects, including constipation and feeling sleepy during the day. I take eight or nine medications. My cancer is cured, but my neuropathy is a chronic issue.

With pain medication, I am able to live, but it is my Sikh practice that gives me strength and happiness. Happiness doesn't come from money or health or a big family, but from the way you

think, the way you live your life. You can feel the happiness while you are meditating, closing your eyes. You cannot be happy without some pain, some trouble.

I want to go back to living a very simple life. In our teaching, God has given you a family, and family is for you to serve. God does not create anything that is not amazing.

Life isn’t about living longer. It’s about living life, serving others. Do your hard work, share with people. The doctors will work hard to protect you, to save you, and you can still live a life. Life is very precious. I am blessed to do what I can do while I am living.

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