

Learnt to Cherish from Lost

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Tomb Sweeping Festival with rain swirling during the worship time along with increasing highway traffic congestion; the hospital was already increasingly busy, and yet the phone rang again: “prep an emergency room bed; incoming 37-year-old female patient injured in a vehicle accident, with a leg compression fracture... will be sent to our ward after surgery.” In accordance with routine care, all staff shall meet the patient in the postoperative ward.

The following morning business resumed as usual, nursing staff reported, “A newly admitted patient from yesterday, Ya-Ching, was rear-ended by a car behind while retrieving items from her trunk. She could have escaped the accident; however, in order to save her mother standing next to her, she was caught between the two vehicles from her knee down, which resulted in an open fracture. Currently on external fixation method, blood circulation from the knee above is poor, and the skin temperature is cold.”

During his round, Dr. Chou Po-Chih found the wound to be quite large; the injured leg appeared pale and cold. Despite her trepidation, pale faced Ya-Ching smiled. The medical team began a series of tests, initiated an interdisciplinary team consultation, and convened all related staff, just to alleviate Ya-Ching’s mental and physical apprehensions. However, after two weeks of attempts to save her leg, Ya-Ching was unable to escape the fate of amputation.

One night after Ya-Ching’s injured leg was amputated, as I was leaving I saw her father in great pain and sorrow. I invited him into my office to discuss his apprehension and needs. Her father commented, “My child is very independent. Since the accident, not once did she complained or exhibited any discomfort...I inquired with many different medical advisors, who responded that amputation should have been ordered immediately after admission. I understand your efforts, and I am grateful. However, I fear that she is

depressed. Her Aunts and Uncles said Ya-Ching complained to them her pain during their visits. I'm afraid that once discharged, she will not talk to us anymore."

From her father comments, we realized that his daughter might develop post-traumatic symptoms. On the following day, during the intravenous catheter replacement, I steered everyone away and begun a long conversation with Ya-Ching.

Ya-Ching said, "It's been a month since my admission, I am afraid to look at my wound. I know my leg has been amputated but right now, I do not want to think about it. I hope that I can continue working. I still have good hands and my employer has given me some paper/secretarial work to complete in the hospital. I don't want my parents to worry because they are growing older." After listening to Ya-Ching, I shared some similar cases from the past and encouraged Ya-Ching to keep a diary for her feelings. I also took the opportunity to present her Master Cheng Yen's books, which I hope she will find support and comfort at her low point in life.

After our conversation, Ya-Ching began to treat our medical staff as friends. Whenever we are free, we would visit Ya-Ching. One month before her discharge, Ya-Ching came to us to request an outing. At the time, we were all shocked and after further inquires, Ya-Ching responded that she would like to go outside to see the community. "I



On wheelchair, with a walker, and putting on her prosthetic leg.



Though Ya-Ching lost a limb, she showed up at the year-end blessing ceremony in Taipei to thank all medical staff and volunteers at Taipei Tzu Chi hospital.

won't go too far. I just want to have my hair done and visit the malls." After hearing that she was willing to step out into the community, we all gave her a round of applause as encouragement.

On her first outing Ya-Ching said, "People gave her a strange look." With everyone's encouragement, Ya-Ching began to learn to administer medication herself. She changed her own dressings, made more outing visits to prosthetic companies, and learned what prostheses best suited her. Then Ya-Ching would happily share her experience during rounds the following days. After successfully completed the wound-care training, Ya-Ching was discharged from the hospital.

Three months later, Ya-Ching called me and asked, "May I come to the 8th floor to visit?" When she appeared, we were happy to see her walking normally using a prosthetic leg. Ya-Ching reported, "I've met a guy with both legs amputated. He is so cool; he can run with both prostheses! My situation is nothing compared to his!" After seeing Ya-Ching is morphed and be able to accept herself and learn to share her experience, I am truly happy for her.