

2021 International Essay Contest for Young People

【Children's Category – 3rd Prize】

Live to Give

(Original)

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I knew a man once. He was my icon, my mentor, and my best friend – my *Thaatha*, as we call “grandfather” in the Tamil language. Spending time with him was like living life to the fullest. Whenever I got picky, he would urge me to value and enjoy even the little things in life, because not everyone has everything. *Thaatha* always volunteered in orphanages and old age homes and he stood as a role model for everyone – including me – who was amazed by his doings. He always emphasized, “To live is to give.” He believed that the meaning of life is to spread happiness, love, peace, harmony, and all forms of positivity. And he was able to do so by helping others. Through his endeavors, *Thaatha* opened up a whole new world to my young eyes.

One spring morning, I'd rushed to *Thaatha's* room to usher him out to see our blooming garden. But he laid on his bed – breathless. It felt like the end of the world; the sky went grey and home seemed lifeless. My only recollection of that day is of my loved ones' mournful faces and tears – lots of tears. His absence made me realize the true significance of one's life.

Whenever I think about *Thaatha*, his voice resonates inside my mind, “You must not only be alive but also live a meaningful life.” These reflections made me wonder, ‘Is running back and forth attending classes and fulfilling family and social obligations called life?’ Perhaps I was being alive, but not living. Is this what every youngster faces? A feeling of stress, confusion, and emptiness, but moving on and calling it life? These questions provoked me to start a small initiative called “YOUunity.” I gathered some pals and shared my ideas about uplifting youth lives to make for a better future generation to cherish. With the guidance of the elderly, we initiated stress-relief activities, food and cleanliness drives, and an eco-friendly neighborhood. Through this initiative, we built each other to become better people

while also giving back to the community. It delights me to know that we youth have a role to play in ensuring a bright future for all lives.

The recent pandemic pushed many young people to recognize the importance of life and drove them to lend a helping hand, and some did so through YOUunity. We bought goods locally to aid farmers, helped the elderly and differently-abled, and started a community fundraiser. During this time, the Earth, too, began to flourish once again without the hustle and bustle of the daily rush. Birds chirped, trees swayed, and animals enjoyed freedom. It gladdened my heart to witness how harmoniously these lives lived. Perhaps it's a lesson to learn - to not disturb or harm, but protect Mother Nature and all lives will bloom on their own. With so many people dying around me, I realized the meaning and value of my own and other lives, and how each moment is an invaluable blessing.

I've now figured out that this life of ours is the greatest of journeys, the most daring of adventures, and, beyond all, the most priceless gift ever. The beauty of life is for everyone to explore their own meaning and purpose of it, however heroic or mundane they find it to be. I for one, have discovered my own meaning of life; it's to simply give life itself a meaning. It's not only to exist, to survive, or to be alive, but to explore, to give, to live.

Life, in its simple sense, is a journey. One must live the journey to give life meaning, not merely just exist. I'm exceptionally grateful to *Thaatha* – the man with hair of silver and a heart of gold; the one who inspired me to explore the real meaning of life; the one whose words directed me to create a meaningful difference in others' lives. For my part, servicing and helping all lives is the one thing that helps me attain complete meaning for my life; it gives me energy, purpose, and the drive to live. In the eternal words of Albert Einstein, "Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile."