

LIVE

Kids can get arthritis too

Runner hoping to raise funds and awareness

Erin McPhee

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IT all started with a limp.

North Vancouver residents Greg Oldrieve and Rosanne Kyle grew concerned about the health of their then two-year-old daughter Senya who was having difficulty walking. Taking her to the doctor, they hoped they'd be provided with answers. Instead, they came away with a slew of more questions. Oldrieve says Senya underwent some X-rays, though nothing appeared out of the ordinary, her diagnosis remaining a mystery.

Next, Senya broke out in a rash inciting more worry in her parents. After further consultation with doctors, it became clear that young Senya had systemic on-set juvenile idiopathic arthritis, a rare form of the disease.

Now six-years-old and in Grade 1 at Cove Cliff elementary, Senya's arthritis is under control and at first glance she's very much an average, happy little girl. This allows Senya to focus on her true passions, one of which is her goal to become a performer. She got a taste for the stage when she debuted as a chicken on a family vacation with her parents and brother Micah, 8, to Los Cabos, Mexico, in the spring. "She looked like a real chicken," says Kyle of their daughter who took to the stage for the performance of Snow White. She fully committed to her role, flapping her arms as she moved across the stage.

However, it's been a long road for such a young girl to travel and Senya's health can change on a dime. Though through it all, she's remained a trooper.

Senya's story of resilience



NEWS photo Lisa King

OMID Kiamanesh, a clinical research co-ordinator at B.C. Children's Hospital, spends some time with Senya, his honorary running mate in Jamaica's Reggae Marathon Dec. 6. His efforts will support research towards a cure for childhood rheumatic diseases.

recently attracted the attention of Omid Kiamanesh, a clinical research co-ordinator with both the division of rheumatology and the division of gastroenterology

at B.C. Children's Hospital. Inspired by Senya's and the other families he comes into contact with, he signed up to run the 2008 Reggae Marathon in Negril, Jamaica,

Dec. 6, through The Arthritis Society's Joints in Motion training program.

Choosing Senya as his

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ON THE COUCH

Holidays serve up more than just turkey

Margaret Ann Speak

Contributing Writer

QUESTION:

I recently returned from a family visit that did not go very well. I have an older sister, Judy, who looks at life (i.e., religion and politics, etc.), very differently than I do. Since my parents' death she has become more aggressive in her manner and tends to dominate conversations. I find myself getting quiet and saying little or getting annoyed and saying too much. My brother and I agree that she is very difficult. I expect to visit again at Thanksgiving and I wonder if you could give me some tips so that things will go more smoothly.

Answer:

Your concerns I'm sure, are shared by many who are heading home for Thanksgiving dinner. There is something about family gathering that pulls up all kinds of Norman Rockwell images and expectations of warmth, love and laughter that most families cannot deliver on. Your best bet is to show up with the simple goal of managing yourself just a little better than you did the last time.

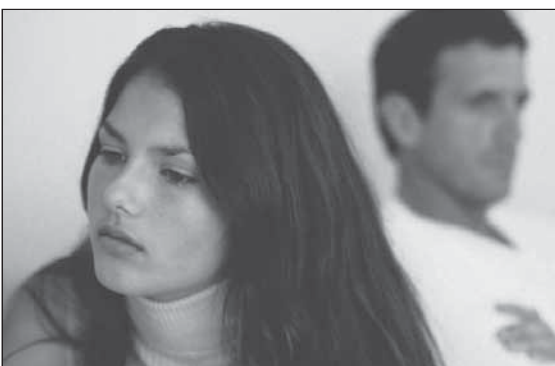
Here are a few suggestions that might help. First, watching your heart rate throughout the visit is critical. When your heart rate goes up, you are moving towards the fight/flight stress response. Your system is revving up for a challenge that usually involves some level of anxiety; this is rarely where we do our best thinking. If you can calm your physiology, you will be able to be more thoughtful

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DAVE NORONA gets inspired by a talented nine-year-old longboard skateboarder. *Page 16*

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SENTINEL student NATASHA DONOVAN talks about the run she organized to support a Nicaraguan youth's post-secondary education *Page 20*



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**LARGE ENOUGH TO KNOW.
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Avoid conversations leading to controversy

From page 15

about what you are hearing and more articulate if you choose to respond. This simple truth is under appreciated and under utilized in most communication.

Second, there is absolutely no reason why your sister, or anyone else for that matter, should see the world the way you do. The differences make sense because we are all different. Even when we grow up in the same family we have different genes and individual experiences that influence our outlook. Sibling stories of the same family event can be vastly different. The best thing to bring to the

table is curiosity. Can you be interested in the differences rather than critical of them? This requires getting your head out of a right and wrong dichotomy and into a place of wonder around how people stabilize their worlds through sets of beliefs that may fly in the face of yours. Many topics can result in friction but religious and political positions are laden with ideologies that are often foundational and therefore incendiary in all but the most mature of discussions. I suggest avoiding them.

Third, it's important to think of the family as a system with all members contributing to the emotional intensity. Your part in it is as big as that of anyone else. Think of the

family as a mobile — even a slight shift in the environment can set things quivering. It's good that you can recognize your difficulty in responding to your sister adequately. That difficulty is at least partially about your anxiety. I think that what you see as your sister's assertiveness is in some way about her anxiety. If you can see it that way, you may find it less threatening.

Further, I suspect that Judy knows that she is on the outside in the triangle with the two of you. When in a triangle, we often consolidate one relationship at the expense of another. This is not useful if your intention is to build more open and honest connections.

There is a wonderful little book written by Ron Richardson called Family Ties That Bind that might be useful. I recommend it to many of my clients. Families are important. They are the blueprint of our emotional programming so there is no better place to work on our own development. Good luck, stay calm and focus on your own reactivity. There is much you can learn.

Margaret Ann Speak, M.A., C.C.C., works with couples, individuals, and families from a Bowen Family Systems perspective at Family Services of the North Shore. Questions? Write onthecouch@familyservices.bc.ca or call 604-988-5281.

Awareness needed to make a difference

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honorary running mate, Kiamanesh hopes to raise \$12,000 toward the establishment of the Dr. Ross Petry Research Chair in Paediatric Rheumatology, the first of its kind in Canada, which will support research to find a cure for rheumatic diseases.

"The reason why I'm doing this run for juvenile arthritis and rheumatic disease is that they're not very well-known in the community," he says, adding that it has been estimated that there are between 2,000 and 5,000 children in B.C. who suffer from arthritis and rheumatic diseases. Prior to working at the hospital, he admits that he too was unaware of arthritis' impacts on children and how debilitating of a disease it can be.

"A lot of these kids have been through hardship and faced adversity that I don't think a lot of us will throughout the course of our lives," Kiamanesh says.

Therefore, he hopes to raise awareness among community members about the disease itself and some of the warning signs, as well as encourage them to lend their support to show arthritis sufferers that they recognize how incredibly brave and resilient they are.

"We desperately need to educate ourselves to be aware and raise funds to support research and treatment so that we can improve their quality of life and hopefully cure chronic diseases like arthritis and vasculitis and lupus," he says.

After Kiamanesh started his fundraising efforts he received the news that his 12-year-old cousin was showing signs of being unwell. While doctors are still working to formulate a diagnosis, his cousin is showing signs of having a possible rheumatic disease. "For me it went to show that it's unpredictable and we need to figure out what's causing this so that we can better treat and hopefully cure (it) in the future," he says.

Senya and her family know all too well the realities and challenges of dealing with arthritis. While Senya's on an effective medication now, there were many unsuccessful trials, making her one of B.C. Children's Hospital's tougher cases,

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