

Communicative sensitivity in palliative care: a case on the “Happiness Angels” of Rajbala Foundation

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Introduction

Prachi, the co-founder of Rajbala Foundation, had spent the past few days planning the details of a workshop with Dr Ruchira, Head of the Paediatric Oncology Department. Right from deciding what activity to conduct to engage the children to the execution, Prachi was ready with the wherewithal and had taken care of every detail. Until late midnight, she had been sending out messages to all previous volunteers in the team to attend the workshop. Some replied to her message and some did not.

The volunteers who had come to these workshops comprised a mixed group of people from all walks of life and age groups. They had a strong desire to lend a helping hand to the Rajbala team in the good work they were doing. The volunteers did assist enthusiastically, but had not been able to demonstrate ownership of the events. They were sensitive people, but not skilled or trained to handle critical illness scenarios. They simply joined with the intent to spread happiness. Prachi and Satish were so grateful to these Samaritans for always coming forward to help. They called them “Happiness Angels”.

Then came the morning of the event; Prachi was all set, but she could not ignore the fact that her success was in the hands that would join her – the hands of her “Happiness Angels” – beautiful souls with a healing touch. After hours of nervousness and uncertainty, Prachi heaved a sigh of relief as volunteers trickled in for the art workshop. Today’s workshop was a part of a series of similar workshops that Rajbala Foundation organizes under its Parents Guidance Support program in the Department of Radiology and Oncology at a leading hospital of the National Capital Region (NCR). Until the last hour, Prachi and her father, Satish Kaushik, were on tenterhooks as to how the day’s event would unfold.

Through fun sessions of music, fine arts, performing arts, information sharing, spiritual talks, etc., the Foundation was slowly but steadily moving towards its mission of providing the healing touch to the children diagnosed at some stage of cancer. Dr Ruchira, Head of the Paediatric Oncology Department, at the hospital was passionate about improving the quality of life of children diagnosed of some life-limiting diseases, along with providing relief to the caregivers. She had many expectations from the Rajbala team. So far, they had never let her down.

Prachi always looked at the involvement from the volunteer’s point of view and observed that several “Happiness Angels”, despite being sensitive to the cause, failed to reach their potential because they had never received the training and information they needed to

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