



# Neil Mukherjee

## Young Caregiver

### Submitted by Katherine MacDonald

When tragedy struck and his grandmother passed away, 25-year-old Neil found himself stepping into a role he never expected so soon in life: being a caregiver and companion to his widowed grandfather, Debabrata (Deb-ab-rata), or “Gumpa”, as Neil lovingly refers to him.

At 88 years old, Neil’s grandfather had lived a full life with his wife by his side for over six decades. Her loss left an unimaginable and unforeseen void in his life, threatening to take away not just his happiness but his independence as his health and mobility slowly deteriorated.


Neil, a young man of 23 at the time, with a bright future ahead of him, decided to provide support and company to his grandfather who provided him with boundless love throughout his life. He recognized that his grandfather, despite his age, was still capable of living in his beloved home - with the right support.

Rather than allowing his grandfather to feel abandoned and as though his life had diminished, Neil strived to help him live, even amidst severe grief. Neil moved into his grandfather’s home, ensuring he was always nearby if needed. He helped with tasks like grocery shopping, meal preparation, home maintenance, medical appointments, picking up prescriptions from the pharmacy, bank appointments, personal care and so much more.

More importantly, Neil took time to simply be there. He saw the effect of loneliness, of losing a lifelong partner, and how overwhelming it could be, so he made a point of sharing meals, and listening to stories of times past narrated by his grandfather. Even though he’s heard “Gumpa’s” stories multiple times since he was a child, he still lovingly humored him.

Neil and Gumpa bond over their shared love of movies and enjoy watching an eclectic mix of old Bengali and Hindi films, as well as modern English classics such as The Shawshank Redemption, The Godfather and Jurassic Park.

Neil has learned how to prepare some of his grandfather’s favourite meals, knowing how much joy, comfort, and a sense of normalcy it brings. But Neil’s efforts didn’t stop at physical or logistical support. He transported his grandfather to local community events and dinner outings with other family members. And, when they’re not enjoying a home cooked meal, they enjoy venturing out for Gumpa’s other favourite, Tim Horton’s, for coffee and hashbrowns, a tradition he’d enjoyed with his wife, Neil’s grandmother.



While at first, he was reluctant to accept his grandson becoming his full-time caregiver often worrying he had become a burden, Neil would reassure him, gently nudging him back into the world. Balancing his career aspirations with caregiving wasn't easy for Neil, but he managed to carve out some time for his education and career development. He completed an undergraduate degree and enrolled in online courses to further his education while spending as much time as he could with his grandfather. He also occasionally leaned on family members to ensure his grandfather always had support, even when he couldn't be there.

Through his dedication, Neil didn't just help his grandfather live at home, he helped him deal with the grief of losing his wife. For Neil, the experience has been life changing. His actions reflect a rare kind of selflessness, proving that with love, patience, and a little creativity, even the toughest transitions can be met with grace and dignity.

Today, Neil's grandfather is happy knowing that he is surrounded by memories of his wife and is supported by the commitment of his grandson. And for Neil, the bond he shared with his Gumpa since he was a child and continues to have, is a testament to the power of family and the beauty of showing up for those you love.