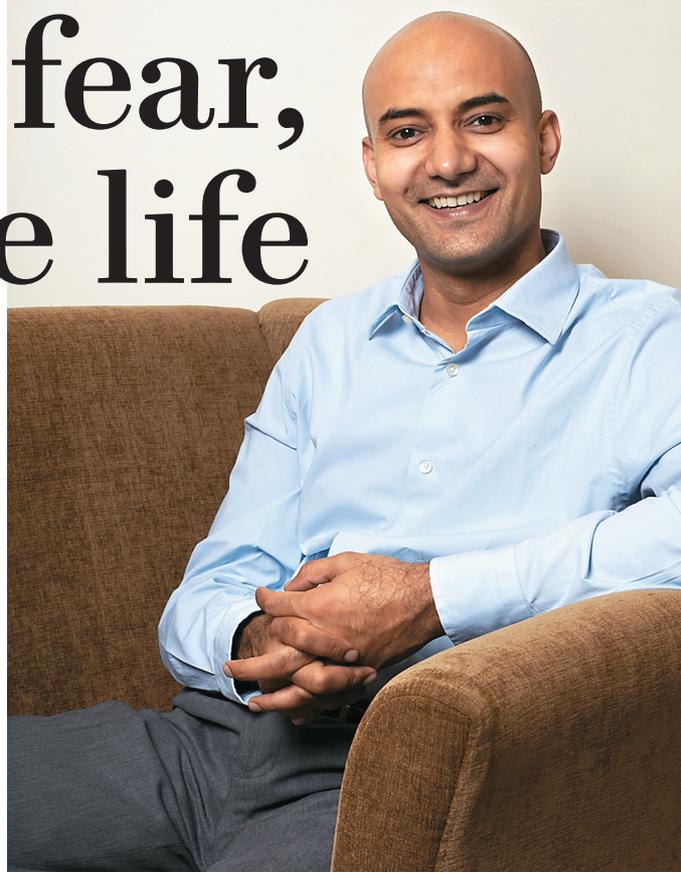


# Don't fear, celebrate life

LIFE IS SHORT WHILE  
OFFERING INFINITE  
POSSIBILITY. AND, DON'T  
WAIT UNTIL THE END TO START  
CELEBRATING LIFE

*Dr Shyam Bhat*



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## PERSON 1:

He has been anxious all his life. He is afraid of flying, of heights, of women, of spiders, of water, and sometimes even of himself if he catches sight of his face in the mirror. His is a terrible suffering, and it seems that all the therapy and medications in the world will not deliver him from this anguish.

One day, he is diagnosed with cancer of his colon. Fortunately for him, the condition is diagnosed in time. He undergoes an operation, endures chemotherapy, and is pronounced cured. Unfortunately, the man is traumatised by his skirmish with death, by the realisation of his mortality. Death now seems to stalk his every move, fanning the flames of his anxiety and in a few weeks, his fear of death has grown to such proportions that he begins to entertain thoughts of suicide.

If this is not tragically ironic enough, he dies a few months later, still cancer free, from a massive heart attack – the fear of death has killed him.

## PERSON 2:

A similar story of lifelong fears, every day a torturous experience, anxiety racking his body, eating him alive with restlessness and fear, as if he has live ants instead of nerves. Then, he is diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in an inoperable stage.

“I have a few months to live,” he says, and proceeds to have the best four months of his life. He works with more purpose, he travels, he dances, he gets into planes, he even goes skydiving. He begins to learn a new language, he makes new friends and when he dies, he has long expunged his anxiety. His fears dissolve and his anxiety dies in the presence of his own impending death.

One person is destroyed by the awareness of mortality. The other is rejuvenated. I juxtapose these two cases because there are lessons to be learned in doing so, in the consideration of just how differently these two reacted to a similar situation.

These stories allow me to feel anew the truth behind the clichés: Do not fear. Life is short while offering infinite possibility. And, don't wait until the end to start celebrating life.

*Dr Shyam Bhat integrates western medicine and psychiatry with eastern philosophy and spirituality in the domains of mind-body wellness, stress management, work-life balance, and leadership. Visit him at [shyambhat.com](http://shyambhat.com)*