

Transcript: Interview with Dr Gladys



What is health for you?

Dr Gladys: It's good when [each person] can define it for themselves, because what makes me happy isn't always what makes my son happy. When there is love there... it connects.

But I'm calling it 'ageing into health', not, you know, [...] not [an] 'anti-ageing' thing. I don't like that term. But I think 'ageing into health' helps us look forward to what we can do. And, you know, it's kind of a nice way of looking at things. Because I am legally blind, and I can't hear well. So, I have hearing aids and all of that, but my eyesight has gone down, but my insight has improved.

I think as we grow into health, we grow into different aspects of our own being, which allows us to do things and understand things that we didn't understand before. And that makes it really interesting.

Tell us about your 5 Ls

Dr Gladys: The first two are love and life. They are... In the beginning, they're the same. It's one unit. It's like when you're pregnant; that baby and you are one unit. What you eat, the baby eats. You sleep, the baby sleeps. And so, the baby develops in the whole process of this. First, one unit, which is love and life combined. But when you grow into the position where you have femifested¹ long enough that you can now allow the baby to be born, the baby reaches out to its own love process, associated with yours. But at that point—the point at which it takes its first breath—it becomes its own unit.

So, then it has to find [...] its own way of connecting with life. So then [...] that unit—which is the new baby, which is taking its first breath—reaches to life with love. It is reaching for laughter [the third L], and joy. But if it reaches not for love, it reaches out just the way a lot of people feel about laughter. [...] If it is cruel, it hurts people, it breaks up families, it causes wars. But laughter with love is joy and happiness.

The fourth L is labour. Labour without love is drudgery. Oh, work is too hard. Too many diapers. This is just... Life is drudgery. But labour with love is bliss. It's why [...] you're doing what you're doing. It's why I'm doing what I'm doing. The work that we [love], we spend more time and energy in than we ever did when we were dragging ourselves through [work that we didn't love], because it's our bliss. It's what fills our soul with life and love and it's what we want to really live for.

The fifth one, then, is listening. Listening without love is empty sound. You know, you can see the best words in the world, and it doesn't mean anything if you're not listening. But listening with love is understanding. It is nice when you begin to understand what you've been doing. Because as a child, I loved life, and my mother was an amazing woman who helped me understand that. And I have all kinds of stories about that. But it was her reaching out to me to let me understand what it was, when I was loving and when I wasn't. And so, I understood it at a soul level. But I didn't understand at a mental level until I began to put it into context with some words. These words help me, and I think they've helped other people too.

¹ A term invented by Dr Gladys, combining 'femininity' with 'manifested'

Tell us about meeting Gandhi

Dr Gladys: Yes, I was ten years old, and we were coming to United States. For me, it was the first time, [but] my parents were coming back to the United States for a referral. And I was unhappy. I didn't want to leave India. I was... I didn't like this place, America. I was scared of it. And I was on a train, and we were going to the boat in Karachi.

Well, this train came to a station. As it came to the station, I had my face plastered up against the window, watching the crowd of people outside. In India, there are always crowds of people. This was a certain special crowd, and there was a small man dressed in a white dhoti, and carrying his staff, walking ahead of the crowd of people. And so I was watching him and as he came up, people were calling 'Gandhi', 'Gandhiji'.

So I knew it was Gandhi. He came up just in line with my eyesight. At that point, a little girl reached up to give him a flower, and he reached down to get the flower. And as he raised his head up from that, he looked straight into my eyes, and we connected. Somehow, as a 10-year-old, I don't know what it was but I knew that this was very, very important. I remember, it was very clear, and I know [...] something really happened [...] because my parents stayed in touch with him for 30 years.

Later, when India was being torn apart—the Hindus and Muslims were fighting and it was so much, you know, death—and my parents were working with the patients with that, having trouble. But they were also working with Gandhi, and they were on the platform with Gandhi. [...] They spoke in the real, good Hindustani, so people could understand them.

But I felt like my connection with Gandhi when I was 10 was still there. You know how you remember longtime friends [...] But that one connection had stayed with me until this time, when we were going through the whole process of that. [...] Gandhi, during this time that they were working together, gave my mother a blue Kashmiri shawl and my dad a Panipat blanket, like you give a friend a gift. So I felt like he was continuing to connect with the connection that we had made when I was 10 years old.

Tell us about the Holistic Medical Association

Dr Gladys: We created the American Holistic Medical Association because we—my husband and I—were working with the whole process, which [...] is a war against disease and pain. We try to get rid of disease and pain, when in reality the disease and pain, in my mind, is there to teach us something. If we can learn from the diseases, then the disease is worth something. But if we are trying to get rid of it, we're spending all our time on trying to destroy something that is trying to teach us something. So, I think our whole focus on what modern medicine is shifts a little—well, quite a bit—when you begin to think of things as teachers, not as horrible things that need to be destroyed.

You know, I have a funny story. Sometimes stories tell better than words. But I had this patient that I've been working with for years, and she had a bad shoulder. Her right shoulder gave her pain, and we tried everything that we could think of. [...] I tried two different ways of using it. Well, we just worked for several years trying to figure out how to help her with this pain. And this one day she was there, and we were talking, but when she was ready to leave, she turned around and reached over her chair and picked up her purse, which was a really heavy. And the two of us sat back down and started laughing. All these years we had been, I mean, several years we'd been trying to look for something that was causing this pain, and she was causing it all the time. Every time she picked up this heavy purse. But it was that kind

of an, 'Oh, yeah. This is what's doing it.' So, when we can look at pain and suffering and things that happened to us in our life as something that's teaching us something, then let's look at what we are doing. And when we see what we are doing and we can connect it, it's amazing.

Tell us about your habits

Dr Gladys: Everybody has habits. You know, you get up in the morning. I go to bed at 8:00 at night. [...] I didn't always... I had six kids. I went to bed, when I went to bed, I had patients... I was up all night. So, you know, you do what you have to do at the time. But at this time, I can do it, you know; get up about 6:00am and have my breakfast and, you know, do regular things. You go and life starts. It's not something that I plan.

I have a friend who called me. She's in her late 90s, and she said, 'Oh, I wake up in the morning and say, "Oh, no."'

And I thought, 'Oh, you poor dear.' I wake up in the morning and say, 'Wow, another day. The sun came up! Something is going to happen today because it always does.'

I lived through it, and in the process of living through it, I learned things. There's always something to learn. You know, you have to have a purpose. What do you get up for? I get up because there's stuff to do every day, even [if] it's just the everyday stuff to do. I have to do it. And it's something that keeps my life going. It's my purpose in life. It moves forward each day. And there's another day.

Tell us about your mother

Dr Gladys: My mother was very good at helping with that. She could find something funny. Actually, about two days before she died—because she fell and broke her knee, and she was 97—Anyway, we were on our porch and looking out at the garden, and she says to my dad, 'Look at that petunia bush. It has at least 400 blossoms on it.'

And my dad says that it doesn't have more than 40.

She says, 'What's another zero?' And that's the kinds of a life that I grew up with; a mother who found something that she could say like that, that made you laugh.

Tell us about your connections in life

Dr Gladys: Well, there were 5 of us children, brothers and sisters... and I have 6 children. And each one of them has been so precious. A life, you know... for me, it has always been important to make connections with people [...] This kind of sideways answers your question, but it's kind of funny. I had my 99th birthday party. I was coming out of the grocery store afterwards, and I had the groceries in my basket, and I was picking them up to put them in my car. An elderly gentleman came by and said, 'Oh, may I help you?'

And I said, 'No, no, I can do this.'

And he puffed himself up and he said, 'Well, I'm 86.'

Well, I puffed myself up nice. 'And I'm 99.' And I marched off and I sat down in my car, and I said to myself, 'You nasty old lady. He was just trying to be nice. Now why did you do that? You better go into the grocery store and apologise.' Yelling with myself in my car. And then I got to laughing and I thought, 'You know, this, it's just two kindergarten kids, and it's so funny. It's a... it's a comedy scene.'

And I sat there and laughed. I couldn't get out of the car. Then I thought he must have gone home and said to his wife, 'There was a nasty old woman who said this to me.'

And I said, 'I bet they're standing there laughing at each other and laughing at me.' So, this is a comedy scene. It allowed me not only to forgive myself for doing it, but to find the connection with somebody who will be able to tell that story. And it'll make other people laugh, you know? And I don't know who that story is going to go to, but it's that kind of a connection. If we're looking for connecting with love, it'll connect us. And it does. It's a joy, no matter how old you are.

Tell us about your children

Dr Gladys: My son John was 7 years old. He came into the living room, and he says to me, 'I wish Jesus was here.'

And I said, 'Oh, well, why?'

And he says, 'Because I have questions.'

I said, 'Well, try me and maybe I could help you.'

He says, 'Oh, you don't know the answers.'

And I said, 'Well, just try me.'

So, he says, 'Oh, okay. Maybe.' He says, 'How can God be if he never got started?'

And I said, 'Oh, well, maybe it's like a big circle that doesn't have a beginning or end.'

He says, 'I knew you didn't have the answers.' And he goes up. But of course, he's president and minister. He came in looking for answers.

You know, if you're looking for something and you're 7 years old, you're going to ask somebody who's around you to give you some answers. And they do. I mean, the questions these kids ask are just awesome.

My other son is a psychologist. He came in the room when he was 4, and he's saying, 'I know something, I know something, I know something.'

I said, 'What's that?'

He said, 'If I make a friend and he makes a friend and he makes a friend, it's going to go all around the world and come back to me.'

Of course, he's a psychologist, you know. I mean, these kids. When you listen to what they're asking and what they're saying, it's just total joy.

Resilience and overcoming difficulties

Dr Gladys: Well, if I'm sad, I cry. If I'm angry, I try not to be messy, you know? But I live through it. I don't try to just get over it. I hear people say—when somebody is going through something—I hear people say to them, 'Oh, just get over it.' You don't just get over something. If you live through it, you learn from it. Otherwise, you're stuffing it in a drawer, and some time, you know, you'll pull that drawer open and it'll still be there. So, if you try to live, understand what it is that you're doing and what you're feeling, you understand yourself. Because within you is the person who really does the healing.

My eldest son is a retired, orthopaedic surgeon. And when he came through Phoenix, he said to me, after he finished his training, he said, 'Mom, I'm really scared. I'm going to go into the world. I'm going to have people's lives in my hands. I don't know if I can handle that.'

And I said, 'Well, if you think you're the one that does the healing, you have a right to be scared. But you are an orthopaedic surgeon. You have learned orthopaedics. Now, if I have something broken in me, I don't want some barber to try fix it. I want an orthopaedic surgeon who knows something about what he's doing, doing a good job. But the fact is that you're not actually doing the healing anyway. Because what you're doing is loving that patient enough by teaching the things that you know well about what needs to happen with healing to the physician within that person, because that's the person who does the healing.

It's the love that we have for another person that reaches to that other person and allows that other—the colleague, the doctor—within that other person to accept what it is that you're saying and make it work.

How do you keep up with technology?

Dr Gladys: I don't! I have a son who is able to do it... You know, it's like my eyesight. I can't—like, I'm legally blind, but my insight is better. I use what I have. And it's not a matter of trying to be 15. What am I, 103? Yeah... It's that kind of accepting the fact that you're ageing. And that... I really call it ageing into health because I have learned so much by living through the things that have happened to me.

Do you use assistive tools?

Dr Gladys: Oh, I have a walker. I couldn't get around without the walker. Yeah, I have hearing aids. My eyes are so bad that there's nothing more I can do with them except just use what light I can use and see what I can see. But it's a matter of accepting what it is.

Like right now. I can see around. I can see you. Yeah, I see your glasses. I see your face in your hair. But, you know, at least I can see that much when I'm looking straight at you. And I know you're smiling. But there are aids I have to use.

What role do your genes play in the ageing process?

Dr Gladys: Oh, I call it ageing into health. Because I'm healthy at another level than I was when I was 28, you know. I mean, when I was 28, I was very strong and did all kinds of things. But now, I don't even want to do them. I tried yesterday, I guess I tried to walk out for some sun.

We were going someplace and as soon as I walked into the sun, I almost passed out. It was so hot here. I used to run in and out of the house just like it was, you know, whatever. But I can't do that now. So, it's accepting what it is. Because I have air conditioning in this little house, you know, and I can do these things. And look at what I can do. I can talk to Australia.

Do you really walk 3,800 steps a day?

Dr Gladys: Well, I try to do that. My cell phone records it. I walk with a walker, and then it's recorded on my cell phone.

How do you encourage movement in your daily life?

Dr Gladys: My house is built with the bedroom upstairs. So, I had to go up the stairs to the bedroom and that kind of thing, you know, certain things that keep me moving. Because movement is essential for life. Things reach out to me. They don't necessarily push me, but they reach out to me. Some things reach out to me, and I say, 'I can't—I don't want to do that now.' I can't think of one, but I know that there is one.

Tell us about faith in your life

Dr Gladys: Well, my parents were medical missionaries in India. So of course it was religion. And I loved Jesus and I still, you know—that's part of who I am. It enriches my life. And I want to keep on with it.

Tell us about the concept of holistic medicine

Dr Gladys: You know, you have to adapt after the concept becomes real about holistic medicine, that there is a dimension of the spiritual aspect of our own being working with that and that it is a body, mind, and spirit process. That's what we reach for. I mean, setting up the holistic medicine concept, it took us two years to decide how to spell holistic, because we were trying to find a word that was health, haly, and holy. And then we can incorporate that concept into the whole process. It takes... it brings us together.

What are some myths about ageing you want to address?

Dr Gladys: Who wants to 'anti-age'? I call it ageing into health because you really can't 'anti-age'. It's a kind of a false concept. You take what's coming and you use it, and you learn from it, and it becomes ageing into health. And I'm telling you, there are things that are really, really good, that happen at this age.

I had a friend call me just before, we were talking, and I had not heard from this person for 30 years, and he had seen me... so I, you know, connections like that which just are still alive. Nobody can take my memories from me. Nobody can take my dreams from me. Nobody can take what it is that I can still think about. And so those are things that are just there for me.

And I am so grateful for them. And can call them up anytime I want to. You know, they're available. I call them Memory Lane.

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