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Perfect imperfections

WHEN someone is in love with another person they will look at them and see perfection. There are plenty of times when partners are in relationships and describe one another as perfect. But does perfection really exist and how does one define it? Most people will never describe themselves as perfect and will find plenty of areas where they would want to improve themselves. Yet many will look for immediate perfection in others. Yes there are areas where one should look to better themselves, but don't some of those simple imperfections make us unique?

When you are in the right relationship you will always bring out the best in one another and see beauty in those imperfections.

There are plenty of men who willingly say they have become who they are because of the women in their lives. They have become better human beings, more confident, responsible and even dress better because of that female influence. So why is it that when we go looking for a partner, we immediately want to find perfection straight away and make snap judgements? Isn't it better to look at someone and think of how great you could become together.

I make this point because there are so many men and women who want perfection in a partner immediately, but ultimately end up alone. They don't realise that the perfection can be created together from the imperfections.

You shouldn't lower your standards, but at the same time shouldn't expect the individuals to be 100 per cent perfect because that doesn't exist. If it did we would all be robots and the excitement from life would be removed. Men who hook up with sexy trophy girlfriends and wives don't look beyond the surface, which in turn devalues their partner and doesn't give them the respect they deserve.

First we should all learn to love ourselves and all those imperfections that make us so unique. Then we should take that sense of understanding into the dating field.

That will help us look beyond the exterior and into a bright future with someone that will give long-term love and satisfaction. By looking into a person instead of making quick judgements on their looks, weight, the way they dress, we will find a deeper connection and a meaningful kind of perfection. Isn't that something meaningful that we ultimately want. That perfect love story that will last well into old age and beyond.

I will leave you with this quote from Ann Landers: "Love is friendship that has caught fire. It is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good and bad times. It settles for less than perfection and makes allowances for human weaknesses."

'You have to chase fear away'

HOW STUNTWOMAN GEETA TANDON GOT

by ASJAD NAZIR

BEING a stuntwoman in India means Geeta Tandon has to show bravery on a daily basis. The 32-year-old regularly rises to the challenge of being involved in death-defying action sequences including being thrown through glass, high speed car chases, getting set on fire and fighting.

The undeniable courage has seen her rise from being a child bride in an abusive marriage to becoming a body double for leading Bollywood stars including Alia Bhatt, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Deepika Padukone.

"I have crossed hurdles in my life and overcome challenges to be where I am today. Yes, I am proud of myself for finding that inner strength, which I believe all women have. My hope is that all women find that same inner power to overcome any obstacles and write their own destiny like I have," said Geeta.

She may be a warrior-like woman working in a male dominated field, but Geeta is a softly spoken single mother who works hard to provide for her two children. Today the Mumbai-based action woman has turned her own scars into shining beacons of hope for other women battling against the odds and become a symbol for girl power.

The difficult journey started when she was just 10-years-old and her mother passed away. This changed everything as her father struggled to provide for his children. "When my mother was alive every relative used to behave so politely and they were so loving. But after she passed away none of them wanted to take the responsibility of helping us and they all turned their backs on us. The following years were very difficult," she explained.

When Geeta was 15-years-old her extended family members told her father it was time she found a husband and within days she was married off to a 24-year-old man from Jaipur. "Any girl in Indian society who is without her mother is looked down upon. They think she must be spoiled, too smart and a burden. The relatives told my father she is old enough to wed and forced him to arrange a marriage. I could never argue with my father and also believed that somewhere there would be stability in the new home, so I agreed."

That was the beginning of a nightmare. She had no idea about household chores and was too young to manage the responsibilities given by overly demanding in-laws. The innocent little girl who didn't know about sex had to cope with a drunken husband forcing himself upon her on a daily basis.

The 15-year-old tried her hardest to stand up for herself, but was in a household filled with bad people. Instead of being supportive, her mother-in-law told the son the best way to control his new wife was by raping her. "At that age other girls were studying and enjoying their childhood, but I was married to a monster who was forcing himself on me every night. I can't describe to you how it felt. He used extreme violence on me and would regularly rip my clothes off my body. Those living in the house could hear everything, but no one would come to help me," she said, with real emotion in her voice.

By the time she turned 16-years-old, Geeta had already had her first child. She was just a child herself and now had to mother a baby.

The abuse didn't stop and the husband would regularly beat her with metal pipes or anything else he could get hold of. She had a second child not long after, but the beatings didn't stop and one day her husband smashed her head repeatedly on the door.

Somehow she found the strength to go to the police, but they told her it was all part of being married. "It was then that I knew if I stayed with him the only end result for me was being murdered in a terrible way. I could also see that my two young children were having their lives

ruined. My childhood had been destroyed, but I didn't want the same happening to them.

That is when I found the strength for them and from them to get out."

Geeta wanted to start a new life with her two children, but was threatened with more violence when she signalled her intention to leave. She ran away with her children and landed up at her sister's house, but received no help. "I thought my sister and her family would help me, but they didn't. I was

told I could only live there if I paid them money. At the time I didn't have a penny in my pocket. All I had was my two children and a determination

I wouldn't return to the hellhole we had just come from," she says with tears in her eyes.

The now single mother of two young children found refuge in a Gurudwara for nearly a week. They were given a place to sleep and food, but Geeta knew she would have to find a job and start earning money to survive. "I needed to earn money to survive and pay for my children's studies. I also wanted to earn so I could stand on my own two feet, have self-respect and make my children proud."

While looking for work, she was propositioned by a wealthy older man to live in a house in exchange for sexual favours. Someone else tried conning her into becoming a prostitute, but Geeta knocked back these advances despite desperately needing money.

She did low paid odd jobs including making 150 chappatis a day to earn money. "If you want to survive in this world you have to chase fear away, especially if you are a woman. Too many times people are guided by fear and take wrong turnings in life. You have to believe a higher power will guide you towards something great and you should never give up. There were times I was afraid, but a belief something better was out there for me kept me going through my toughest times."

She then joined a bhangra dance group and was told about someone who worked as a stuntwoman. Geeta had never heard of the profession and jumped headfirst into it despite not having any training. The first time around she was set on fire, got burned and inhaled smoke. Undeterred by the injuries, the brave young lady went back for more. "I was adamant I wanted to be in this line of work and gave it my all."

OUT OF A DANGEROUS MARRIAGE AND ROSE UP

'I am proud of myself'



Quick Q & A with Geeta Tandon

You have an incredible fighting spirit. Where does that come from?

I have always seen that single women, especially mothers, don't get a fair place in society and they are ultimately looked down on. I have been determined to change that way of thinking and make a place for myself. When there is talk of woman-power, I

want the name of Geeta Tandon to be mentioned.

You went through an abusive marriage and faced incredible challenges in life. How aware are your children of your past? I have nothing to hide from my children. They know everything and are very proud of me. I am proud of them and

draw strength from them every day.

What advice would you give women trapped in abusive marriage, thinking there is no hope? Men who are abusive towards women are ultimately very weak. So first, be a strong woman and don't be afraid. Don't suffer abuse in silence and don't change as a

person. If you can't find help, find inner power that is there in all women to break away and start a new life on your own terms.

What inspires you?

I am a woman! I get inspired by being a woman and am proud to be one. My children also inspire me greatly. I don't think I would be here today if it wasn't for them.



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Seven struggles today's generation don't have



Paying for music: Today you can listen to your favourite songs for free online, but it wasn't long ago that music wasn't so accessible and those selling it took advantage of consumers. They would charge high prices for music and there was no guarantee you could hang onto it. If the CD got scratched or tape unravelled then it was back to the record shop to spend more money. Those who couldn't afford music had to wait for their favourite song to come on the radio so they could record it on a tape.

Less TV: It was only a few decades ago that most people only had access to four television channels. Yes you read that correctly youngsters, just four! Today's kids are spoilt for choice with hundreds of TV options, on-line streaming and video sharing sites like YouTube. Perhaps that explains why they don't leave the house much and are permanently glued to a screen.

No mobiles: The combination of cheap mobile phones, free talk time and WhatsApp has resulted in the whole world being connected like never before. But it wasn't too long ago when the only telephone communication kids had was the landline, which was shared between the entire family. When they wanted totally privacy they had to head over to the cash guzzling phone box. Shock horror, no selfies and you couldn't check who was phoning.

No social media: Perhaps the biggest addiction for those living today is social media, but that is a new phenomenon and didn't exist not so long ago. So there was no way of sharing selfies, fake new stories, silly videos, stolen inspirational quotes and photos of what you just ate.

Going to the library: Youngsters, that big building you pass by that has lots of books in it is called a library. When you wanted to do your homework you had no choice but to go into one of those buildings and read a book instead of surfing the internet to see if you can "get inspired" by someone who has already done the same work.

Foldaway maps: Today digital maps ensure you never get lost and have easy access to directions. It wasn't so long ago that you needed an A-Z or a foldaway map to prevent you from getting lost.

Endless waiting: Today everything is done instantly. Previously you had to wait 500 years for a file to save or download, wait days before seeing your developed photos and use a combination of guesswork and fast forwarding on a video tape to get to your favourite bit. If a friend was running late they couldn't tell you because no one had a mobile.

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