

Atos

Atos Medical Your voice



From cancer survivor to cancer winner

Is he for real? That was the question I asked myself when I first got in contact with Shrenik Shah. In the emails we exchanged before our meeting in London he came across as extremely positive and friendly with a passion for helping others. Almost to the extent where I felt it was a facade. But it was not. Shrenik is a truly inspiring individual and a living proof that life can be lived again after a total laryngectomy.

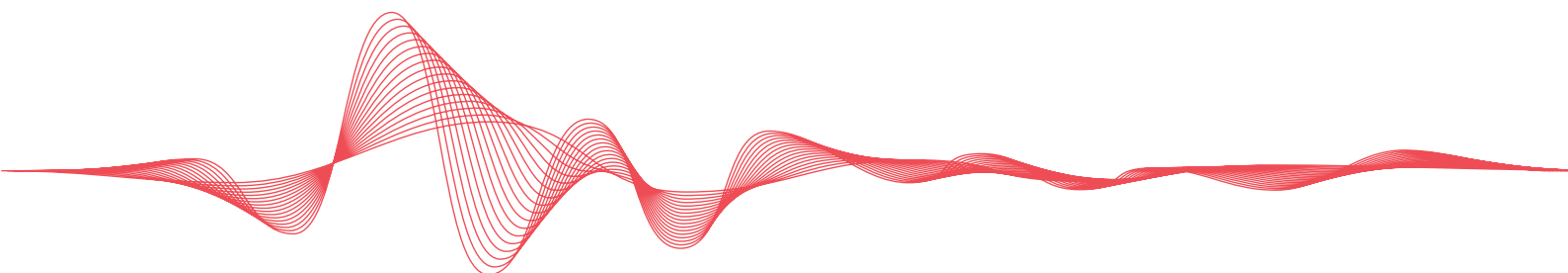
Almost 20 years ago Shrenik Shah was diagnosed with stage 4 larynx cancer. Something that would leave most people in disbelief and afraid of what would happen next. This was not the case for Shrenik and his wife. Instead, they decided to accept it and look at it from a positive point of view. In the weeks before surgery, Shrenik had big difficulties breathing and was forced to stay in bed most of the day. This was miles away from his normal day life as a hard working business man, loving father and husband. With the surgery came an opportunity to breathe normally again and thereby get back to doing the things in life he appreciated most. Working, helping others and take active part in his family.

Surgery went well. The cancer had been removed and Shrenik had survived. But as he puts it, surviving is one thing but getting back to life is a completely different task and something only you can make happen. Shrenik says, "Surgeons today are extremely skilled. They are able to perform wonders like removing your cancer from your throat but they cannot help you get back to life. That is entirely up to you". It was never a question if Shrenik would get back to living a normal life. It was only a matter of when. With a strong will and an unparalleled ability to look at the positive things in life, Shrenik returned to work only 60 days after surgery. Even today, more than 20 years later, he is still going strong and working.

Help others – it will help you

One of the things that helped Shrenik return to life immediately after surgery was to reach out to other cancer patients and survivors and help them. "Get out there and help others. It is extremely rewarding and it will give you a sense of purpose. Seeing others succeed because you have helped them will allow you to think positively and act as a role model. That way you will get beyond merely surviving cancer but become a cancer winner."

Today, Shrenik and his wife spends 2 days / week in a local hospital helping cancer patients and their loved ones get back to life. As if that was not enough, Shrenik is also travelling the world spreading the message that cancer can be overcome and life can be lived. He does so via teaching UK laryngectomees yoga, he promotes the book "10/10, Immersive Narratives of 10 Cancer Winners" in which he features and by travelling to US to spread good karma.



Take small steps and remember to smile

To Nilam, the wife of Shrenik, getting back to life is like learning to walk again. “When we were kids we had to learn to eat, drink, sleep and walk. Something we did not know how to do. The same is true after your total laryngectomy. Things you took for granted has to be learned again. But remember to be grateful – you have survived and you can influence the quality of life you will have by taking one step at a time.”

In the process of learning the basics again Nilam reminds people to have complete faith in your clinical team. As she puts it, they only have one goal and that is to help you. Use them as much as needed and accept that progress will sometimes go fast and other times slow.

Do not forget to smile

Besides from relying on the support and guidance of the clinical support team, Shrenik and his wife has remembered to smile and keep their sense of humor. When I sat with them in a café in London I could not help getting inspired by their love for each other and their constant joking and teasing each other. Shrenik testifies to the fact that there is no such thing as a smile and a good laugh to make things easier to overcome.

Yoga can be a way to control your thinking

When I first learned that Shrenik has been practicing yoga while living with his laryngectomy I was surprised and intrigued – I wanted to learn more. After meeting with Shrenik I learned that yoga is much more than the actual exercises. To Shrenik it is way to control his breathing and thereby his thinking. This means he gets all the benefits yoga has to offer while at the same time the psychological and mental help needed to control his thinking and remove negative thoughts. I asked Shrenik to share a yoga posture most can start to do at home.

Yoga posture:

Sun Salutation: Try to do a few rounds to begin with and slowly increase the number of rounds until you can do 5-10 during one exercise. It is a great way to start the day, so try to get the include the routine as part of your morning routine. Do the individual steps slowly while focusing on your breathing. Take deep breaths and exhale slowly.

You can find the steps in this youtube clip: **Sun saltutation for beginners**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wP9DIBgiZ1o>

Please note: You should only do the Sun Salutation (12 steps) if you are able to do so physically and it feels comfortable. Make sure to consult with your clinician before starting to do the exercise.

**Finally, with Shrenik’s own words.
Go become a cancer winner.**

