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Naked Curiosity: What a Difference a Day Makes



d.
scott-bush

My gym buddy, Dan, would be excited.

I'd just mentioned him in a column so, now he could stop asking, "When are you going to talk about me in something you write?"

I headed to the gym, eager to tell him the news. As I checked in, I noticed an announcement taped to the front desk counter. Someone had died and funeral service details were listed.

Then, it registered. I gasped. It wasn't just someone who had passed away, it was Dan.

Earlier in the week, we'd spent a half hour chatting on side-by-side cardio equipment. We'd talked about his new job, preprogrammed prejudice, a

here and now.

In the blink of eye, here and now can become dead and gone. And if you haven't planned for the latter while you're still in the former, those left behind will have a lot more to deal with than grief.

Just ask Dan's family.

My old friend Kitori can speak volumes on the subject, as well. He'd been dating Ronald for nearly a year. They hadn't moved in together, yet, though that was being seriously discussed. Ronald traveled to Boston regularly for business. He'd grown up near there and enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with his family, during his work forays.

During one particularly stressful trip, Ronald had a heart attack in the elevator on the way

"Ronny passed away. I put an obituary in the paper at home but I didn't bother with any here."

Kitori had no words.

In the years since then, he's taken every opportunity to turn his tragic experience into clear suggestions on how we all can avoid similar situations.

"There's plenty of stuff written about how people in domestic partnerships can protect themselves with legal documents but there is almost nothing directed to people who are single or who are in fairly new relationships," Kitori points out.

He encourages his friends to frequently update their emergency contact information cards in their wallets. He counsels that drawing up wills and power of attorney paperwork is only the first step. Keeping the beneficiary information current for all our life insurance policies and everything else is equally important. We should get acquainted with and have the phone number of at least one family member for as many of our friends and romantic companions as possible.

"It's easy to buy into the notion — especially when

I'd asked if he had an organ donor card in his wallet. That got a big laugh.

few of my writing projects and steroid use in major league baseball. A typical, eclectic mix of topics that made our daily workouts speed by, filled with conversation and laughter.

Less than twenty-four hours later, Dan was dead. He'd finished his shift and was getting ready to head to the gym, like he did every day, when he had a heart attack. In the blink of an eye, his wife was a widow and his two very young sons were without a dad.

What a difference a day makes.

As the shock began to wane, I remembered one particular conversation we'd had about his general lack of planning and financial provisions for the future. I'd asked if he had an organ donor card or any other kind of emergency contact information in his wallet. That got a big laugh. Aside from a few hopes and dreams for his kids, Dan's purview was limited to

up to his client's office. By the time the doors opened at the floor he'd selected, he was dead.

When they were especially busy, it wasn't uncommon for Kitori and Ronald to go a couple days without seeing each other or talking on the phone. After the third day without a call from Ronald, Kitori was worried. He called the hotel where Ronald had been staying but was told he was no longer a guest. That really kicked Kitori's concern into high gear. He'd already left two dozen messages on Ronald's answering machine.

Kitori had a key to his boyfriend's apartment but, when he got to the door, it was already open. Ronald's sisters and their husbands were carting things out like movers with no emotional connection to what they were carrying.

"Oh, weren't you Ronny's friend?" one of the sisters asked Kitori, when she saw him standing in the doorway.

we're young — that being responsible to ourselves and the people in our lives is something that can wait," Kitori preaches. "But being prepared for accidents or death isn't something we can put off 'til tomorrow."

He's right. Here, today. Gone, tomorrow.

What a difference a day makes. ▼

D. Scott-Bush's work appears throughout the country. E-mail may be directed to NakedCuriosity@aol.com.