

Nandna Garg & Jyandeep Tripathi

Never Give Up



BY JENNA CAPUTO / PHOTOS BY ANGELA MIA PHOTOGRAPHY

The day that changed Nandna Garg's and Jyandeep (JD) Tripathi's lives started off like any other. JD was working from home that day while being with their daughters, Siya and Tara. Nandna headed off to work, reminding them all that she had an important meeting at 3:00. In the middle of the meeting, her phone rang. Siya, then seven, was on the other end crying—Daddy was at the bottom of the pool and wouldn't come up.

Life had changed in an instant.

Originally from the suburbs of Delhi in northern India, Nandna had many interests growing up, enjoying everything from dancing and singing to sports. At eight years old, she was introduced to computers at school and was intrigued. "Computer programming fascinated me," she says. "I could change the programs to get different results and made it interesting for myself. The computers back then were big boxes, unlike today's, but it was very fascinating for me to be able to do quick processing, too."

She received her master's degree in computer application and has worked as an IT consultant ever since. "I love that I can make lives easy for people and organizations through the use of technology. When I look at a problem, I feel like a puzzle solver with the knowledge of different and modern technologies that I use to solve it," she explains.

Meanwhile, JD grew up in Indore in central India with a love for all things cricket. He also received a computer application master's degree. They met in college, over the years progressing from classmates to a family. They both ended up working for the same company in India before work sent them overseas to the United States. JD arrived in 2004 to work in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Nandna was sent the following year to Minneapolis. Their company

kept transferring them from city to city based on the project requirements before JD got an opportunity to work in Schenectady. Researching the area, they fell in love with Niskayuna right away, being especially drawn to the Mohawk Hudson Trail and all the parks and outside activity possibilities since they love the outdoors and hiking. "Niskayuna just spoke to us as home," says Nandna.

At the time of the accident, JD was working as a consultant with GE and Nandna as a VP of Digital Development for CAP COM Credit Union. But when she received that panicked phone call, everything changed.

Nandna told Siya to get her sister out of the pool and scream for help while she called 911. No one knew what exactly happened. By the time she reached home and met her family, JD had already been taken to Ellis Hospital. She was told that JD had medically been dead, but they were able to resuscitate him. However, he sustained a severe anoxic brain injury—a brain injury that results from a complete lack of oxygen for over five minutes. He was conscious when she arrived, but suffering from multiple seizures, so they induced a coma. The doctors told her to give up and have him be an organ donor, thinking he would likely pass away in the ICU. "I can still see the face of the physician who told me that he didn't even have a 0.00001% chance, but I knew he would defy the prognosis," says Nandna. She also knew he did not want to be an organ donor. He felt strongly he should meet God at the end the way God had sent him down in the beginning. He was a fighter, and she was not going to give up so quickly.

Nandna fought to have JD moved to the Brain Trauma Center at Albany Medical Hospital. They took him off the medication, and he came out of the coma eight days later, but the prognosis was still



grim. “Once he opened his eyes, they said that he may only be with us for a few months and will be vegetative (a term I completely hate) for the rest of his life.” They weren’t going to give up. Eventually, the physicians released him to Sunnyview Rehab Center before he ended up in Pathways Nursing Home.

While in rehab, Siya had asked him to blink four times if he loved her. He did. Since that day, they’ve been able to communicate with him using blinks and facial expressions. One blink for yes, two for no, three for I love you, furious blinking for pain or distress, as well as blinks for please and thank you. Their family is now working on getting an AAC device (a device that uses alternative communication methods to supplement or replace speech for people with impairments) for him so he can have consistent communication with everyone.

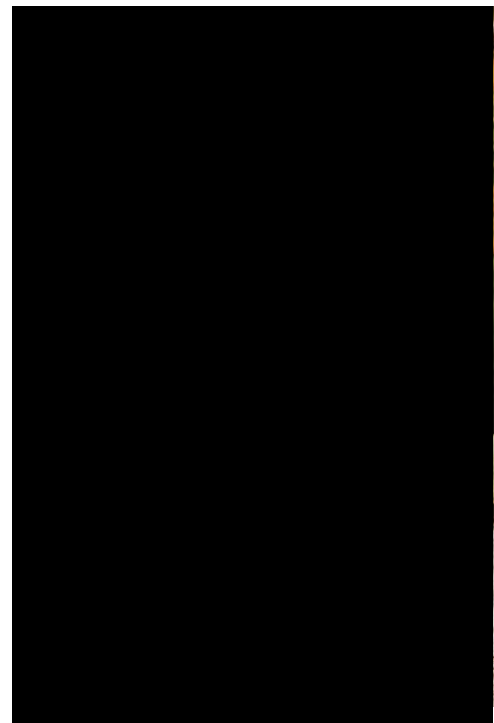
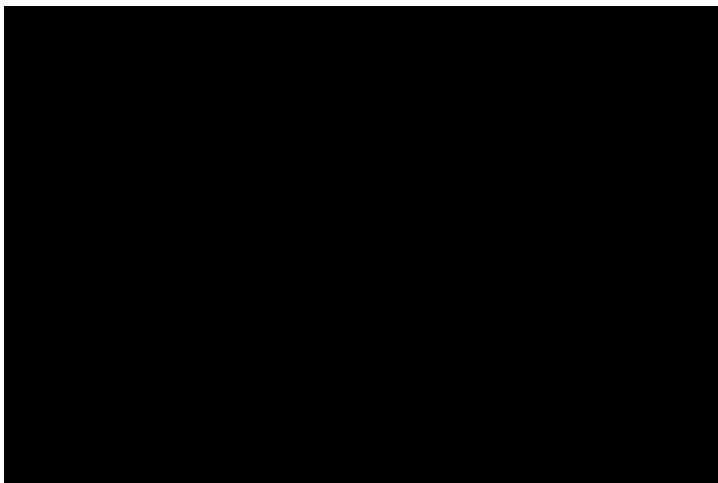
JD needed around the clock care, but Nandna knew he also really needed to get home. It was a struggle, but she finally managed to bring JD home in July 2020—three years after the accident. He’s been making great progress since. Due to the brain injury, he now needs to relearn everything, even just standing. In October, he started outpatient therapy at Sunnyview and learned to stand using a standing frame. Progress was slow but encouraging. Discharged from Sunnyview, therapy now continues at home.

They have turned the living room into his bedroom so they can be with him at all times. Nandna now runs her own consulting company—Digital Sense, LLC—assisting local businesses with their websites, CRM, and the other software they need so they can focus on their passion. Her long-term goal is to create a platform to help business owners focus on their work without having to get into the craziness of all things digital. She completes her work by

JD’s side. The girls do their homework there, and they sing and dance for him and all watch TV together. Friday nights are family movie nights.

It has been a struggle getting the help they need since they are only allowed \$13 per hour to pay for care. While the search continues, Nandna cares for him on her own from 6am – 11pm. Her father sits up with him all night, since JD needs someone there and awake 24/7. Since he is now discharged from outpatient therapy from Sunnyview, Nandna plans to create therapy areas in the home—indoor as well as outdoor. She is also working to get a PT table and other therapy equipment they need at home to be able to continue his therapy. It has been tough, but worth it. They are seeing progress. Local chiropractor, Dr. Terry Dhanjal-Garcha, from Family Chiropractic & Wellness in Clifton Park, has been a big help. She has assisted their family as well other local Traumatic Brain Injury families to obtain the high-cost equipment they need by working with the manufacturers to create a discount for these struggling families. In the meantime, JD has recently managed to stand without the standing board and went from being completely nonverbal to saying their names and “I love you” this past February. It’s a miraculous start after initially hearing he would never survive.

Nandna works to spread awareness about brain injuries to others throughout their journey. She has a Facebook page where she posts about JD’s recovery and is working on prognosisgrim.com, which she plans to develop into an informative website for brain





injury and home health care. Long term, she wants to make it into a non-profit organization to help others with anoxic brain injury and to create more and more awareness. “Brain injury doesn’t differentiate—it doesn’t matter what your race is, what your age is, where you live, what your color is, what your lifestyle is. The risk is just the same for everybody and it can happen to anybody anytime. Awareness about the symptoms, causes, and possible treatments is the only way to fight it,” she says.

As a family, they love everything life has to offer, always looking to try new activities and getting outside whenever possible. All big-time book readers, they also love anything arts and crafts. Siya (now 11) and Tara (now 6) are enjoying sixth and first grade in a virtual setting this year due to the pandemic. Tara loves writing songs and aspires to be a scientist and to build robots. Siya is a wonderful musician, playing piano, violin, and flute right now, and looking forward to learning guitar next. She is also a kidpreneur, creating Rakhi bracelets to sell on Etsy for Raksha Bandhan—the Hindu festival that celebrates the love between siblings. On this day celebrated in August, sisters tie a bracelet, or Rakhi, on their brother’s or sister’s wrist in exchange for a promise of lifelong love and protection. Siya has completely sold out of her bracelets for the last two years. These shiny bracelets are made of vibrant threads and beads in all colors. From designing to creating to fulfillment to accounting, she does it all herself, and her family is so proud of her!

Looking forward to JD’s birthday on May 9th, Nandna is compiling video messages of love and support from their family and friends to show him on the festive day. However, they are a family that celebrates each and every day they are alive. “We treat each day as special and

thank God for another happy day with our loved ones,” says Nandna. “Birthdays and religious days are always special, but our most special day is August 1st, which we call STRONG DADDY DAY, and we celebrate it as a re-birthday for JD—the day he drowned and died but came back to us.” As they live each day to the fullest, Nandna reminds us that no matter how hard life is, “Never Ever Give Up!”

To follow the development of Prognosis Grim, visit www.prognosisgrim.com.

For more information about Nandna’s work and options for businesses, visit www.digitalsense.us.

To order Siya’s Rakhi bracelets, visit her shop on Etsy at www.etsy.com/shop/HandMadebySiya.

