

Hadi K.

2024 Scholarship Achiever

Hi, everyone. Thanks for joining me today. Today, I have the pleasure of sitting down for a conversation with Hadi who is one of our life lessons scholarship winners, Hadi. Welcome and congratulations again on winning the life lessons scholarship.

So, can you share some of the challenges that you faced in the recent years and how you overcame them?

Yeah, so we can go back to when I started university. Um So right. As I started in 2020 my mom was first diagnosed with uh breast cancer and then a few months after that, uh my father was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer. So instead of starting as a freshman in university and uh you know, going to welcome week and going to the first day of classes, I was now both a student and a caregiver for both of my parents. So instead of that university experience that I had imagined for many years, I was doing my homework, uh my tests, my assignments and labs uh and not a library but uh the lobby of a busy cancer center just down the street here at Princess Margaret and going from floor to floor to see both of my parents.

So, you know, we know how difficult it is to finish high school, to go on to university, all of the, the tests, the homework, the exams and things like that just in general. So, what was it like? How did you balance that with everything going on with your parents?

It was just persistence. Um I would have to think about every time I sat down, I really made a promise to my father while I was taking care of him that despite any trials and tribulations and ups and downs in life, I would continue to move forward. My father was somebody who was really the embodiment of resilience and had a very strong willpower. So I tried to also have that willpower and continue with my studies despite difficulties and keep my goal in mind of becoming a physician and uh and decide that no matter what circumstance I'm in, I'm going to find a way to get it done. And the number two was how can I take this experience? Which is a horrible experience. I don't wish on anybody to something positive to contribute to the world somehow.

Also, in that kind of situation, there's a big financial burden and impact as well. Can you talk to us a bit about that?

The financial burden on my family really started after my father passed away. So, a few months after my father passed, uh bills had accumulated uh and become past due. So, one example is the Wi Fi Bill, which had become so extreme that Wi Fi was cut off and instead of doing my homework in the lobby of uh Princess Margaret Cancer Center, like before I was now doing it uh in the McDonald's car park and the Tim Hortons uh and whatever other fast-food restaurant. But despite that I had to focus on not the things that I didn't have, but the things that I did have so that I could keep going, stay determined and uh complete my mission in life that I had set out no matter what. And did you have to pick up any work at the time? My mom was uh coming out of Cancer uh and she was very ill. So, I also helped support my family financially instead of using my OSAP money on myself. I found myself paying bills in secret privately without telling my mom so that there could be some relief things that I do have, which will then keep me going.

Yeah, your father sounds like he was an amazing inspiration. Uh Who would you say is your biggest role model in life and why?

So definitely my father, as I said, uh the willpower, the perseverance that he had uh through sickness, Uh just dedicated to take care of our family, experiencing so much frailty throughout his sickness, uh really just persisted in whatever he was trying to do, whether he was taking care of our family or community service, he would really put his best foot forward and no matter what, continue. And so, being raised by somebody like that has really shaped me to who I am today. And I believe is the biggest reason of why I was able to persist and why I'm able to persist. I really think that, uh, it's not the skills that I have or, uh, because of no uh achievement of my own, but the sacrifices of my parents.

Yeah. Well, you're, you're very modest. At Manulife I, we're here to uh to protect and care for Canadians who need us. And uh Life Insurance is one of the key products that, that we offer. One of the key things that we do to help Canadians. Can you talk about how having adequate or more life insurance coverage in place would have made a difference in your situation for your family?

So, when thinking about life insurance, I could compare it to a cushion to fall on. Sometimes in life. We go through ups and downs and when it gets really hard, we kind of fall, right? It feels like falling. So the coverage or the help for Manulife would be like a cushion to fall on. And you know, the biggest thing when I lost my father was grief and we can't change that. But um uh life Insurance can definitely uh make the other things much easier like financial issues, financial issues which then caused education issues. Uh So it would, would have been a little bit easier to move forward with life insurance. And this is part of the reasons why I have such an appreciation for Manulife because it's a company founded in Canada which helps Canadians and serves as a cushion for Canadians.

I can't even begin to describe how life changing the scholarship is. It has given me the ability to challenge to uh dream bigger. And uh it's so much more than a financial reward, which is obviously going to be such a huge and is such a huge relief for me and my family. Beyond that, knowing that there are people who have read my story who are interviewing me today. Uh and are interested in being part of my journey is so meaningful.

How will the life lesson scholarship help you achieve that?

The life lesson scholarship more than just a huge cash uh award is so meaningful to me because it was one of the first times that I had written my story so clearly and so much in detail and to know that there is there are people that have read my story and have been motivated by it and support me and support me in my goals and my mission is so meaningful to me and uh is something that motivates me. Um It really feels that there are people who are invested in me, standing behind me, standing beside me continuing to persist to achieve your goal.

That's great. And, and one last question and just general advice, you know, we talked about everything you were dealing with, you know, your course loads, all this going on in your personal life. What advice do you have for people who find themselves in that scenario where they're just overwhelmed?

They have so many things going on. They're not sure if they can get through it all. You know, it's more stressful than I could even put into words. Uh It really feels like there's a cloud of stress on you, but you have to be determined. You have to keep your goal in mind. You have to focus on the things that you do have and not the things that you don't have, and you have to do it step by step. So really when you get to work, forget about all the noise, forget about everything that's happening in the world and think about why you're doing what you're doing and lock in and get that assignment done one by one. And uh through that method of going one by one, you'll be closer to your goal than you know.

Hadi. Thank you so much again for coming in today and sharing your story with us. I know it inspired me and, and the rest of the team uh to hear about it. The Manulife team and I believe in you and we're excited to see what you do over the coming years.

So, thank you and thank you all for tuning in.