
Die of Love

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I've read an article about dying of love, and I kept thinking about how

romantic the idea, and in the excessively dramatic twist I always find in that phrase when I hear them in songs. However, afterwards I've seen the name of my grandmother Paula repeated a thousand times in a street and cafeterias of Old Havana, and since then I've spent two days thinking about the desolation my grandfather felt during the four years he survived her. He was all that time dying of love, slowly.

His name was Eugenio and he recently passed away. This month of July he would have turned a hundred years and we were very proud of the privilege of having him as the trunk of the Cabezas family. But grandpa wanted to leave this world from the same moment his beloved wife closed her eyes. Every day after the passing were agony because he expected to die, at least, sleeping.

However, he woke up healthy and fresh, but without courage or desire to speak but of his suffering without her.

He suffered my grandmother absence, and he ranted to popular beliefs that ensure that in different ways you can see those who are no longer among us. Each day he told me: "everything is a lie, I don't see her at night or in the shades; I don't listen to her, nor does she leave me messages. And shattering his only hope of finding her again hurt me from the impotence of not alleviating his burden.

For this reason, I was compelled to this article that spoke about dying of love. The science says

that it's not far-fetched. It even has a name: Takotsubo cardiomyopathy. It's what we have commonly called broken heart syndrome, and has to do with extreme situations like losing a loved one suddenly. In this context, the first few days are the most complex. That's, when the couple remains sad and stressed, and can trigger heart-related conditions such as chest pain, shortness of breath, arrhythmias, and fainting, similar to the symptoms of a heart attack.

In addition to depression, other contributing factors are advanced age and the of heart disease history condition. My grandfather was very healthy, but now he was almost a century old, plus angina and a pacemaker.

His name, Takotsubo, is of Japanese origin, and that is how they call a type of pitcher used in octopus fishing. The condition is named after shape the heart adopts when it suffers such pain: the left ventricle muscle of the heart is swollen because blood pumping changes abruptly. This happens due to the excess of certain chemicals substances, such as adrenaline and dopamine, present in the bloodstream when living extreme situations of this nature.

All is in the mind. Neuroscientists already confirm that emotions may have physiological repercussions because the nervous system controls the cardiac and immune system. That's why our platelets count drops, for example. And that happens to all of us, both as teenagers, and as adults. The difference is in the body's response. When you are young, the effects can be noticed with the loss of weight or mood, and its duration is variable, but it's normal that it doesn't last; sure, it depends of mental strength. On the other hand, for the elderly, loneliness is lived worse. Losing a loved one, a companion of many years, turns out to be, serious.

So here we have the answer. Yes it's physical, as well as mental. Having a broken heart is no longer just a poetic phrase or a euphemism for me; there are people who really feel a lot of pain, and one of them was my grandfather, who slowly died from lack of his better half for more than 70 years, called Paula.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
