HEALTHY NEWS

Inspired by this Woman Who Could Smell Parkinson's on the Skin, Scientists Develop an 'E-Nose' that can Do the Same

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Joy Milne, for most of her life, seemed to have a "superpower" she didn't have a clue about. She didn't know that she had an amazing and a bit scary biological gift that scientists are exploring today.

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If it hadn't been for her husband, Les, she would've stayed forever unaware of this ability. Joy and Les met in high school when Les was a swimmer and Joy was a new transfer at the school. He was 17 and she was 16.

Joy remembers how they used to dance at parties and she was always amazed by his lovely smell, a male musk, she described it.

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He was thoughtful, quiet, and with a wicked sense of humor.

They married after college and Les studied for a doctor whereas Joy became a nurse. They have three kids together, all three are boys.

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For Joy, life with her Les was everything she had ever hoped for.

An Unexpected Thing Happened One Day

One day, around 10 years into their marriage, when Les was 31, he came home and Joy said how he smelled differently. His male musk smell had a strong nasty yeast smell.

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At first, she thought it had to do with the hospital where he worked and she told him to take a shower. But, this didn't help in any way and the smell only grew stronger as time went by.

Joy began nagging her husband, telling him that he's probably not washing enough. Les started to get mad when Joy told him to shower because he couldn't smell anything and neither did anyone else around them.

With the years passing by, Joy started to feel that it wasn't only her husband's smell that changed. She said his personality and character were also changing. Les was less tolerant and moodier.

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The couple fought a lot and soon enough, the qualities that Joy liked in Les (patience, dignity, and thoughtfulness) began fading away until she says he turned into a totally different person at the age of 40.

One night, Joy was woken up by her husband who was attacking her. He screamed and shook her, without any awareness whatsoever.

Les had a nightmare and Joy started to worry that maybe he has a brain tumor. They had to seek medical help. They sat in a sterile office when they received the news that her 45-year-old husband has Parkinson's.

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Joy Discovers that She Can Smell Parkinson's

During the next two decades, Les and Joy tried to make the best out of the situation, but it was hard.

Around seven years ago, they applied for a support group for people with Parkinson's. The two were late and when they walked into the room full of people with the condition, the first thing that Joy noticed was the smell!

Joy realized that all of these people had the musty, greasy smell that her husband had when he was 31.

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When they drove home, she decided to tell her husband since they're doctors and they are aware of the significance.

The Couple Shares their Discovery with a Scientist

The couple contacted a researcher of Parkinson's at the University of Edinburgh, Tilo Kunath. At first, he wasn't interested, but later said he dismissed it because it didn't seem possible because one wouldn't normally associate neurodegenerative conditions with an odd smell.

However, several months after, when Kunath learned that research showed dogs are able to sniff cancer, he thought of the couple and then contacted Joy if she wants to come for a test that he created.

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For the experiment, Kunath asked a group of people without Parkinson's and another with Parkinson's to take home white T-shirts and wear them overnight, and then bring them back.

When Kunath gave the T-shirts to Joy to smell, the accuracy was stunning.

Joy only made one mistake only. She isn't only able to smell the condition but also does it in the absence of its usual medical presentations.

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The Hope for a New Tool that Could Help Diagnose Parkinson's Early On

The super-smelling ability of Joy has brought up a new area of research for scientists. The hope is to develop a tool that will be able to detect the disease early on.

Researchers have reported, in the **ACS Omega** journal, that they've made an artificially intelligent and portable olfactory system or an "E-nose" that could someday become the diagnostic tool in every neurologist's office.

According to the scientists, people with the condition perspire a higher amount of sebum, as well as yeast, hormones, and enzymes, all of which create the odd smell that Joy can sense.

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Sources:

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