

Mayo Clinic Q&A - Donate Life Month

Tue, 3/8 6:28AM 14:53

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

ted, liver, wonderful, donate, kidney, mayo clinic, living, organ donation, altruistic, days, recipient, donor, meet, healthy, kidney foundation, kidney donation, donation, people, feel, simple blood test

SPEAKERS

Dr. Halena Gazelka, Ted Garding, Narrator

N Narrator 00:01

Coming up on Mayo Clinic Q&A, April is Donate Life Month, a time to recognize the generosity of donors and share the importance of organ donation. Today we'll meet a person who not just once but twice answered that call. He's donated part of his liver and also a kidney, helping others to live a more happy and healthy life.

T Ted Garding 00:21

I would like to say, from my own personal experience as a double living organ donor, personally it's changed my life for the better and will everyday as long as I live. I feel as though I've been blessed and that I've received a gift because I was blessed with the health to be able to help people in that way. It's been nothing but a 100% wonderful, very rewarding positive experience.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 00:49

Welcome, everyone to Mayo Clinic Q&A. I'm your host Dr. Halena Gazelka. 57-year-old Ted Garding, is Mayo Clinic's first altruistic living liver donor. The Living Liver Donation Program allows a healthy person to donate a portion of their liver which then regenerates over time. What makes Ted's story even better? This isn't the first time that Ted has donated an organ altruistically. He previously donated a kidney back in 2010. April is Donate Life Month, and here to share his story is Ted Garding. Thanks for being here, Ted.

T Ted Garding 01:29

Thank you. It's more than my pleasure.



D Dr. Halena Gazelka 01:32

Well, welcome. And thank you for your altruistic organ donations. What an astounding story.

T Ted Garding 01:41

I thought I was the one that has been blessed to be able to be healthy enough to help people in that way.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 01:50

Oh, that's wonderful, Ted. I told you before we came on the air here that I have not heard of someone donating both their kidney and a portion of their liver to individuals they don't even know.

T Ted Garding 02:01

When I filled out the application through the Mayo Clinic to become a living liver donor, I actually didn't think that I was gonna be able to either because I've already given a kidney. And I didn't think I would be healthy enough, but it's amazing.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 02:23

And you know, the term altruistic donation is also new to many listeners, meaning that you aren't selecting the person, or you don't know the person. Sometimes someone will donate a kidney or a portion of their liver even to a relative. What led you to decide to donate a kidney in this manner back in 2010?

T Ted Garding 02:45

Well, we were taught to be kind to people and to help people in need. Our parents were very, very good parents, and we were taught good values, good morals. And we were taught to help people in need. We were blessed with good health in our family. And I am well aware that there are a lot of people that aren't as fortunate. Being kind to people and helping people in need has always been the most important thing to me, ever since I was a little kid. So, I'm always looking for ways to help people. And, you know, in 2008 or so I was at a loss of what I could do. I knew there was something calling me, and I couldn't figure it out. So, I actually prayed for it, and one morning, it was Easter morning in 2010, I was in the kitchen and an article came on the TV, and they mentioned kidney donation. I almost dropped what was in my hands. I ran in there, and I looked down at my feet up and over my body and I said wow, I'm healthy enough to do this. I can't believe I haven't thought of this before. It was awareness. Awareness is very powerful. If I would never have become aware of it that morning, I may never have even thought of donating a kidney. But the second I became aware of it, I started the process. Nothing was going to stop me, and I contacted the U of M and began the wonderful process of becoming a living kidney donor.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 04:33

What a wonderful story, Ted. And now you're making a lot of other people aware that they can donate. I know that you eventually were able to meet the recipient of your kidney. What was that like?

T Ted Garding 04:46

Well, it was absolutely, it touched my heart that Joe and his family wanted to meet me. And it's hard to actually explain the emotion. They're very wonderful people. They accepted me into their family basically. And Joe's a fantastic, wonderful human being. We have since become very good friends, and he couldn't be doing better. He's doing fantastic, and he's living a normal life now with quality to his life. I believe, I remember he told me his nephrologist told him, they refer to my kidney as being a rock star, and they told him that it may last 50 years.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 05:44

That's wonderful. That must be an amazing feeling to see someone living a good life as a result. It's wonderful. So, for most people, that would be enough, Ted. But no, you went on to seek out other opportunities. What led you to look into the Mayo Clinic living liver donor program?

T Ted Garding 06:04

Well, years have gone by, and I help people in many ways. I volunteer for various organizations. I'm a national representative for the Kidney Foundation. I have become friends with people in group homes. And though here again, I knew there was something more and things sometimes are just out of your control, and they happen. It's hard to explain. But I just picked my phone up one day and I Googled living liver donation. There came the Mayo Clinic's website, and I filled out the application. I honestly can't comprehend that I've done anything. That's the cool thing about it. It's miraculous. That is sometimes the only word I can think of.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 06:56

So, tell us a little bit about your experience with liver donation at Mayo Clinic. What is that like?

T Ted Garding 07:02

When I filled out the application, they got back to me in a few days, and they asked me if I would do a simple blood test. We did. I passed. And then they invited me down for three days of more extensive testing and interviews. Those three days were absolutely wonderful. I felt fantastic down there. I felt very comfortable. I knew I was in the hands of the best of the best. And for me personally it was a wonderful three days, even though it was three days of tests, and it was a fantastic experience. And then I came home and a few days later the transplant

team contacted me and said that I qualified to be a living liver donor. It brought tears to my eyes. I personally feel blessed like I'm receiving the gift to be able to help somebody in need in that way. It's a wonderful thing. That was a great phone call.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 08:20
How long after that did they ask you to donate?

T Ted Garding 08:27
For them to find a recipient took about a month.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 08:31
Okay. Then what was the surgery and recovery like?

T Ted Garding 08:38
Well, to me I was on vacation. I can't think of anything negative. Even with the kidney and the liver. It was nothing but a 100% positive experience. Very rewarding. I can't think of anything negative. Recovery was nothing. I feel 100% recovered now. I did a month ago. And actually, since I gave a kidney and now part of my liver, for some reason I've never felt better physically in my whole life. And of course, mentally when you help people in need, the natural response will be you're gonna feel better psychologically too.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 09:34
And I think Ted, anyone that can refer to donating a part of their organ as a vacation definitely has some stamina that the rest of us could learn from.

T Ted Garding 09:49
It's marvelous. I would do it again and again, mainly to help someone in need.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 09:56
Have you met your liver recipient?

T Ted Garding 09:58
No, hopefully maybe someday if they choose to. That would be wonderful. I did receive an email from the recipient a few days later thanking me, and she did say that now I will be able to

watch my grandchildren grow up. And she called me her angel. And at the time everything was going great, and I pray and hope that everything still is.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 10:34

Ted, what message would you like to send to other donors and potential donors?

T Ted Garding 10:46

I would like to say, from my own personal experience as a double living organ donor that truly, personally it's changed my life for the better and will everyday as long as I live. Mainly because when you do help someone in need, you're naturally going to feel better. I feel as though I've been blessed and that I've received a gift because I was blessed with the health to be able to help people in that way. I honestly cannot think of anything negative about giving a kidney or part of my liver. It's been nothing but a 100% wonderful, very rewarding, positive experience. It's hard to put it into words. And you know, I know that if I was in need, I would wish that somebody would help me. I would do it again and again.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 11:58

Well, we are inspired, Ted. Thank you.

T Ted Garding 12:01

And you're always going to be in good hands. You have nothing to fear. When you go through the process of being a living organ donor, they look out for your better interests. Always. And that was a good feeling. They were looking out for me, and that's something to take into consideration too. The whole team, the transplant team and all the doctors are looking out for your better interests throughout the whole process. And it's amazing that medical science can do this. And for me personally, I thank God that I was blessed with the health to be able to help people in that way.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 12:56

Thank you so much for sharing with us today, Ted.

T Ted Garding 13:01

Thank you. It's nice to have met you all, and it's more than my pleasure to shed light on living organ donation. It's a wonderful thing. And you can not only give someone life, you can give quality to someone's life. You can allow somebody to know what it's like to feel good. Something, you know, I've been able to feel good, and I've had quality to my life every day.

And there's a lot of people that don't know what it's like to feel good. And they don't have quality to their life, and you can give that to them. And they can be with their family and friends. I received the gift. It's a wonderful thing.

D

Dr. Halena Gazelka 13:54

I love that, that you received a gift. That's wonderful, Ted. Thank you. Our thanks to two-time altruistic organ donor, Mr. Ted Garding, for being here today to share his story and to help us celebrate Donate Life Month. I hope that you were inspired as I was today and that you learned something. I know that I did. We wish each of you a wonderful day.

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Narrator 14:18

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