

A YOUNG WIDOW CONFRONTS LIFE

Camille Prats talks about the pain and challenges of losing a husband

By Kenneth M. del Rosario

THE hardest thing that actress Camille Prats had to endure in her life was waking up in the morning and realizing her husband, Anthony, was not by her side. In a painful twist of fate, Camille had become a widow in her 20s when she lost her husband to cancer in September 2011.

A year and a half later, Camille has begun to come to terms with what has happened. It's not easy moving on from such a terrible loss, but by focusing her energy on raising their six-year-old son, Nathan, she admits being able to pull through the toughest times.

"We had so many beautiful plans together. Suddenly, it seemed all our dreams were gone," she said. The actress was speaking about her experience, for the first time extensively, in a forum organized by AXA Health Solutions recently in Makati City.

Anthony was only 30 years old when he was diagnosed with nasopharyngeal cancer, a form of cancer that starts in the

nasopharynx, the upper part of the throat behind the nose and near the base of skull.

The disease, while one of the most common types of cancer in Asia, was already in a late stage when correctly diagnosed. In a blink of an eye, barely a year later, he had succumbed to the disease.

Raising a boy is a challenge, Camille says, having been forced to be both the mom and dad to Nathan, especially with the long hours her acting and hosting duties required. Fortunately for Camille, she has strong support from her family and in-laws.

"Nathan is a very curious child. At first when he was looking for his dad, we would tell him that his father would be forever in a sleep. It was hard, especially when later he asked us point blank if his dad was dead, though we were careful not to use that particular term around him," Camille recalled.

One of the things the actress learned from the ordeal she and her family went through is that everyone should be prepared for whatever challenges life throws in the way. Anthony

seemed perfectly healthy, save for colds and the occasional fever, until his last few years on earth.

Unexpectedly losing a husband at such a young age is something that happens in real life, but many people fail to realize the real possibility-until too late. This was why Camille was asked to share her experience during the informal forum that AXA Health Solutions organized.

Aside from Camille's harrowing experience, AXA invited several industry experts to elaborate on the health of the Filipino people, as well as talk about the financial side of being healthy.

"We wanted to teach people the value of planning early so the unexpected things in our lives do not ruin everything we have worked hard for," said Jay Anne Rempola, AXA Segment head, during the event.

As part of their "Fail-proof your future" campaign, AXA Health Solutions, one of the biggest players in the health insurance company in the world, launched two health products: Health Exen-



ACTRESS and TV host Camille Prats shares the story of her husband's fight against cancer, and how it affected her and her family.

tials and Health Max.

Health Exentials is a comprehensive health insurance that provides cash benefit when one is diagnosed with a critical illness such as cancer, stroke, or heart attack. An insured is covered up to age 100.

"What I learned is that you don't have to be old or sickly for anything bad to happen to you. Fighting a disease is, in fact, expensive, what with all the tests that need to be done," Camille said.

Despite her busy schedule, she does her best to be mom and dad for Nathan, making sure she keeps Anthony's memories alive for their son.

She said: "In a way, we're lucky because we had our savings unlike, perhaps, many people. But even Anthony knew we couldn't spend everything on him because we had Nathan to think about. Now, I'm in the process of getting my own health insurance because I want to have the peace of mind that whatever happens to me, the money we saved for Nathan's future will only be for him."