

Facing death with dignity

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I have always told my relatives and friends that when I die, I hope that it will be painless and fast. I have never liked pain and suffering, especially my own.

Knowing what I do about medicine and knowing what you do from reading or just watching medical shows on TV, you do not have to be told that there are many ways to keep your body pumping blood and lots of air in your lungs and heart and with those two working, your brain alive.

Technically and legally you might be alive, but the QUALITY of your life might be that of a vegetable. You continue to be alive and all your organs work but if they turned that machine off, you would die. Now all of those machines have a special life-saving function to a certain point.

But after that, you might be dying a slow death that is more prolonged and painful because no one wants to have the responsibility for turning those life support machines off to let you go out in peace.

Instead, folks are sticking you with needles, pounding on your chest and only allowing those who care about you to see you for a few minutes.

My own dream for my own death is to be in my little cabin on top of the mountain my

land is on and to go out in peace surrounded by a few loved ones and the wonderful Alaskan outdoors that have given me so much in this life.

But according to Murphy's law, "anything that can go wrong, will go wrong." So my nightmare is that just when I am up on my mountain thinking my last thoughts, someone calls an ambulance and drags me away to the hospital where I get connected to every kind of noisy machine known to man.

Enter "The Living Will". A "Living Will" is an attempt to provide people with a sense of how their lives will end, as well as taking off a lot of burden

from family and doctors on just how far they have to go to try and save you.

In other words, it is a statement to your family and doctors that if you are dying, to let you do it naturally and not to be kept alive by artificial means. It is a witnessed statement that you have to make **BEFORE** you get in that situation, in other words, while you are still well.

AND you can cancel it anytime you want either by telling someone or writing it down.

Basically you are telling your family and doctors not to take any heroic steps to save your life once they see that you are going to die anyway. They still will

try and save your life as much as they can, but once they see that you are going to die shortly anyway, they will not prolong the suffering.

Some argue the living will might be harmful because doctors might not try as hard as they might want to to try and save your life. Some doctors might not respect the living will based on their own moral judgments and consciences. If this is the case, they have the obligation to tell you and your family.

I think that a number of medical people would not rather have this subject published or talked about too much since it

is for some a legal or moral nightmare. Yet you need to know about this as one of your rights as a patient and should talk to your lawyer and doctor about it.

The Living Will expresses your desires to your family and doctor at a time when you might not be in a position to do so yourself. Basically it tells them that when all else has been tried and you cannot get back to a state of functioning as you would like to in life, then to let God and nature take their course.

Dying with dignity, that's what this is all about