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Advance Care Plan Example by CL

CL is a 55-year-old grandmother. Her beliefs about life and death have evolved over the years, informed by personal experiences, including: an acute life threatening illness in early adulthood; the death of her common law husband four years ago; her professional work with hospice/bereavement clients and their families; and a contemplative and mindfulness practice.

She has penned a guiding document for her loved ones and health care providers that reflect those beliefs and to assist them in making health care decisions in the event that she is unable to speak for herself. She is willing to share her document as a resource for others wishing to begin the conversation within their own families and/or develop their own plan for care.

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My Beliefs and Wishes Related to Care

First of all, please trust and believe that you are not alone in making any hard decisions you may have to make regarding me and my care at this moment. It is my belief that, even if I do not appear to be in my right mind and am unable to speak for myself, I will still be with you in spirit and communicating with you intuitively; when you listen in and pay attention to cues and clues I give through non-verbal communication, intuitive thought, and symbolic communication. Don't be fooled by appearances, I am still with you in heart and mind ... now, through this transition and beyond, whatever that may be. For love never dies and there are no mistakes, you are doing the best that you can with the knowledge, information, and experience that you have at the moment. I can't ask for more, and I trust that things will unfold in the way that they need to, each and every moment.

So please use this document as a guide to decision making, based on my thoughts and beliefs at the time of this writing, knowing that nothing is ever black and white, and so

When I Can No Longer Speak For Myself

I turn that responsibility over to my son, that he may speak for and make decisions on my behalf taking into consideration what I have written in this document and in consultation with the physician(s) and other health care providers as appropriate.

To my son ...

I encourage you to involve and/or request that Hospice become involved in my care if they are not already.

I would also encourage you to seek guidance and support from those who have guided and mentored me in life; and/or from family and close friends of mine you relate with. Including but are not specific to: (list provided in person).

What I Would Like Family, Friends and Other Caregivers to Know, Regarding Care

(Please consider having some aspects of the following, also kept at the bedside)

Throughout my life I have made use of metaphor, symbolism, and lyrical language especially when broaching sensitive subjects or to talk more broadly. It makes sense that I will continue to do so even into my dying process. Some of it may sound like I am not making sense, or perhaps delirious or hallucinating. If you are not familiar with this consider reading Final Gifts and/or Grace In Dying, which may give you a better understanding generally and also insight into my own current belief systems. Nature is a metaphor I have been known to use a lot in my writings.

However, each of you that know me will have a better insight into the metaphors and symbolism that I use. Without getting too analytical, and trusting your intuitive awareness and inner knowing, be

THE REPRESENTATION AGREEMENT - SIMPLE FORM

A legal way for you to name someone to make health care and personal care decisions for you when you are unable to speak for yourself.

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curious and you will likely be able to interpret and understand what I am communicating.

I prefer not to be in pain and yet sometimes I know pain serves a larger purpose. I want my doctor to provide me with medicine to relieve physical pain and/or other symptoms; and for all my caregivers to access and employ other interventions such as energy modalities, meditation, and mindfulness practice, both prior to and if necessary when there may be pain and suffering, including that caused by emotional, spiritual or existential distress, that may also manifest or exacerbate physical pain and/or other symptoms.

If I am close to death, due to the end stage of a disease process or experience a catastrophic event, from which I am not expected to recover, and that requires living on life support for my remaining days, I would prefer nature to take its course and that life support treatment only be considered on a limited temporary basis:

- to allow family members the option to see me
 - and/or the necessary travel time to my bedside
 - and/or to give family members a few days to come to terms with the reality that my life is at an end.
- If this is the case I would encourage those family members to seek support from those who have similar belief systems about life and death as I have had and/or have guided and mentored me. See above for suggestions.

I would also ask that even in this state, you ask me, if my wishes are still the same as per these instructions and to pay attention and trust the non verbal communication and clues of my response. I believe that even in this altered state, inner work can be done and so if I indicate a change of mind, to honor that change. I trust that whenever the internal work I've needed to do, has been done, the indications will become apparent to you and others through connection, non verbal communication and intuitive knowing; and my life in this body, on this earth will come to an end.

My preference is to be cared for with kindness and respect for my body and being. My preference is to be kept clean, warm and safe.

I am comfortable with both solitude and mindful presence, please provide me with both. You may also want to consider offering to:

- Hold hands
- Meditate beside and/or with me quietly or via a guided meditation/visualization
- Match/pace our breaths
- Encourage and support mindfulness and present moment experience
- Utilize sound and music as a means of connection
- Read to me
- Be silent and yet present

When considering any of these, or other comfort measures, please offer it as an option to me, while also tuning in to yourself and trusting the intuitive process and the spiritual/heart connection we have in that moment, as to what would best meet both our needs right then and there.

Where possible I would like to have a few pictures of my loved ones in my room and near my bed especially pictures of: (names provided)

My preference is to die in the most suitable place, taking into account both my needs and that of my loved ones. My general preference would be at home or hospice.

I wish for my family and friends to seek and accept comfort, support and guidance in caring for me and/or if challenged by my condition or impending death. I do not see tears and sadness as a bad thing, as they are an expression of love and loss. I do not need you to "put on a happy face" for me, as that really only builds barriers between us. I would rather that you shared your heart with me and if it is feeling broken in the moment – to allow that to be, so we can comfort each other together - heart to heart. Know also I believe we have and will continue to have a heart to heart connection beyond this world.

I ask my family, friends and caregivers to find ways and/or support for themselves in dealing with any discomfort/anxiety/moral distress that may have manifested as a result of caring for me and/or in how I have been cared for, that conflicts with their beliefs system and ways of being.

What I Want My Loved Ones to Know

Where possible I would like to have my network of friends and family told that I am sick and/or dying and ask that they hold me close in thought; and to also let them know the following:

To each and every one who are part of my family of origin and my family of friends and connections.

Thank you for being part of my life, for bearing witness to various ages and stages I have lived, experienced and been humbled by. For being present in my life even if only from a distance, as our paths have woven together and apart.

Underneath it all, individually and collectively you each matter deeply to me as part of a larger family connection, some through ancestral lines, others through marriage and others still, through choice of connection. The love I have for you specifically and for the wider connectedness we all share, cannot be broken or taken away.

In moments of intensity, and for other reasons, people can and do inadvertently hurt each other. Please forgive me for any harm or suffering I may have caused you through any of my actions,

behaviours, or attitudes over the years. Some of it may have been reactionary, coming from my own place of hurt, anxiety, or retaliation of a perceived wrong; while many more would have been unintentional and a result of my ignorance, immaturity, or inability at the time to be present to what was truly going on or was needed at the time.

And know that I forgive you for any and all discomfort, misunderstanding, and hurt that may have occurred, between us, felt or imagined on either of our parts.

Thank you again for being part of my life, for the lived stories we have experienced and shared together; and the love that is eternally there for love never dies.

After Death

- If feasible, I would like any viable organs to be harvested and donated so that they may be used to extend or enhance someone else's life or quality of life.
- With respect to the disposition of the vessel that I lived life through (this body), I leave it to my son, as to what would bring him most comfort. I am not this body. In time, and through whatever means, it too will no longer exist returning to the earth as elemental particles. It does not house any aspect of me and/or who I was.
- I continue to live with you daily, in your heart and mind and am present energetically, seen and unseen and in all manner of life manifested. I can be found in the breeze that touches your face; the sound of the lapping water on the shore line; in all the new growth springing forth seen in the leaves on the trees, flowers in the garden and all the bounty and beauty found constantly in nature, when one pays attention to it..... And I live in the stillness of presence that transcends the bounds of thought, time and space and is also accessible and available to you, every moment.

With Love

Accent photo courtesy of Christina Nienaber-Roberts