



The Best Way to Say Goodbye: A Legal Peaceful Choice At the End of Life

Stanley A. Terman

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What are our two greatest end-of-life fears? To endure unnecessary prolonged pain and suffering, and merely to exist in a state of total indignity and dependency such as in Alzheimer's dementia. Uninformed, some people add layers of tragedy to their destiny. Some choose to die prematurely; others, violently; a few risk imprisonment by mercy killing. Often their lament is, If only Physician-Assisted Suicide were legal. Yet there is an alternative that is already legal: Voluntary Refusal of Food & Fluid. While sometimes intentionally maligned as barbaric starvation, ceasing all Food & Fluid is a truly peaceful way to hasten dying by dehydration. While taking an average of 14 days, it allows for the exchange of healing goodbyes with loved ones who can forever be sure it was these patients' intent since they could have changed their mind.

What makes the process peaceful? Knowing how to control thirst. (The author went on two fasts himself to learn what works.) In addition, good discussions with family members before beginning. Consistent with the principles of some religions, this method is available even for patients who are physically too sick to put a lethal dose of medication in their mouths and swallow.

By creating strategically effective documents for a trusted agent or proxy to withhold Food & Fluid on the patient's behalf, this way to *Permit Natural Dying* can actually extend the quality of life of those with early dementia. They can enjoy living until they reach a point they have previously described in behavioral terms (perhaps with help from using one of the book's forms).

Beyond serving as an authoritative source of information to strive for an ironclad strategy for dementia, the book endorses life's most ironic fact: When people know they can control when they die--they can, and often do--choose to live longer.

Poignant memoirs illustrate its practical guidelines and useful forms; for example, why Proxy Directives are more effective than Living Wills, and how to make Living Wills work better if they are the only available choice.

The book-within-a-book format of this book is as unique as its content is comprehensive. Over 300 citations, an index, a glossary, and further resources... yet its core reading is user-friendly for all. The subject matter is lightened by 22 cartoons and humorous stories; deepened by provocative discussions of the secular meaning of Sanctity of Life ; and broadened by considering the emotional, practical, clinical, legal, moral, ethical, religious, spiritual, and political aspects of a subject that will affect absolutely everyone.

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