

My support for voluntary euthanasia came about around the time of my mother's long, slow dispiriting decline and demise. Watching someone I loved deteriorate due to ill health, old age and Alzheimer's disease broke my heart. She had to be removed from her home because her carer, in this case another family member, could no longer provide adequate support.

My mother was devastated and felt betrayed, it was not part of her plan. She had pacemaker and was on many drugs because medical science could control a multitude of ailments. She was not going to die fast.

Mum would never have had a plan in place regarding her end of life choices. For her generation it was best to ignore it. Doctors were thought of as God. Whatever a doctor said was the gospel truth. Because of her Alzheimer's we lost the person she once was a long time before she died. I held my mother one night while she sobbed uncontrollably and not knowing why. She was confused. I think she knew she was going to leave her home, she knew she was going to die at some stage and she knew it would not be in her home.

Mum had gone to respite care in a nursing home in Kew. Beautiful place and lovely caring staff. She was sad to be there but comfortable. My brother and I made a decision to move her from a bright airy room quite a distance from the staff desk to a room much closer to staff (the biggest mistake ever). Making decisions for an elderly unwell confused parent is difficult. I watched other patients. Some appeared happy enough. Some sat all day tearing up paper without even one visitor, being fed pureed food, being in a nappy at eighty years of age and totally dependent. Another patient was a doctor and a stroke victim, totally immobile. These were just a couple who would die in this home with nothing but sympathy from an unrelated visitor. We had family that were unable to visit our mother because it was too painful to see her in this state. (What a cop out)

I don't want this to happen to me if I can help it. I don't want this to happen to my family if I can help it. I don't want this to happen to anyone if it is not their choice.

Governments must confront and positively resolve the issue of voluntary euthanasia. This could be done by establishing regulated clinics, similar to Dignitus in Switzerland. Be accepted to take a place when your time comes but make that choice for yourself. Advise those close to you of that choice. Pay for that privilege if your end of life passage allows for that.

In essence, I want to make my own choice. I want future generations to be able to make their choices. A choice is just that, not a compulsion.

Julie Spinks

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