

Give me dignity or  
give me death

Business



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After his wife drove him down to the Dairy Queen for his last Heath Bar Blizzard, the family all gathered in his room to share memories. They had arranged hospice care, so that he could be comfortable and taken care of leading up to the big day. His relatives made jokes along with him and listened to his favorite music. He ate his favorite foods from his favorite places with his favorite people, and after Lee said his goodbyes to his family, he drank the Seconal solution from one of his favorite Scotch glasses.

Lee Fronk Johnson was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer and was in constant, writhing pain. After being told that he had little time left to live, Johnson chose to die with dignity. “ To fear death is nothing other than to think oneself wise when one is not. For it is to think one knows what one does not know. No one knows whether death may not even turn out to be the greatest blessings of human beings.

And yet people fear it as if they knew for certain it is the greatest evil,” spoke the great philosopher Socrates. No one can imagine the world without themselves in it. They remember the house they live in and the work place they go to every day and erasing themselves from the picture is nearly impossible. Fear of death lies somewhere inside each and every person, whether it be fear of never waking up or fear of illness; everyone has feared death at some point. “ Death with Dignity” is not to induce fear, but to establish peace with oneself.

Terminally ill patients lay in their beds wondering when it will happen. Pain spreads through their body as they wonder when the suffering will cease. It gives patients the option to choose when to pass away instead of waiting

until the day comes upon them unexpectedly. It gives people time to reunite with their families, and share memories, laughs, and goodbyes. Fighting a brain tumor for five years, Jeannette Parker could not stand to go on and begged her daughters to end her life.

Each and everyday brought more pain and more sorrow, as she struggled to hold on. Not only did Jeanette's illness and pain affect her own well-being, but the well-being of her daughters, who felt the weight of guilt upon them as they were unable to fulfill her last request: serenity. Her daughter Liz was torn. Now a mother, she could never take the life of her own; the idea was too hard, too terrible. Liz wished her mother had more choices. All Jeanette wanted was relief, but she had to wait out five tortuous years to finally find peace.

The "Death with Dignity Act" would've given Jeanette a chance to die by the side of her loving daughters and end her suffering. The main qualification for "assisted suicide," is terminal illness. For this option to even be considered, the patient must be terminally ill, at least eighteen years of age, and deemed to pass away within the next six months. The patient must consult their doctor, wait two weeks, and consult their doctor once more, also providing a written request. The patient is the only eligible person to put in such a request; being capable of making and communicating health care decisions is key.

The request is then approved and the patient may receive their prescription after a forty-eight hour waiting period. Euthanasia is a process. The law is

not in place for depression. It is not in place for disabilities. It is not in place for the fighters of disease. It is not in place for the insane.

It is in place for people with death hovering at their door. Ben Mattlin was born with spinal muscular atrophy which limited the use of his hands and prevented him from ever standing, but even so he pushed through life. As an older man he is much more fragile, struggling to even swallow his food. After going into a coma, his wife was forced to make the decision to either keep him alive or pull the plug. She knew that Ben had aspirations that he still dreamed of completing, so she chose to keep him on life support. He made a remarkable recovery, thankful that his wife had made the decision that she did.

Though his condition was brutal, he is proud to be alive today and proud to call himself a father, grand-father, and husband. Ben had the choice to end his life not only while in a coma, but many times as his condition worsened and his pain increased. He chose not to because he wanted to complete his goals in life before he left the world. "Death with Dignity" would allow all persons the equal right to choose based on their wishes, rather than based on the rights given to them. Ben made the decision to continue on with his life, but this is not everyone's first choice, especially anyone who has been given only six months or less to live. Imagining someone taking their own life is scary, but forcing someone to live, incapacitated, locked inside their dying body, in pain, and unable to do anything for themselves is scarier.

After arguing the point of excessive treatments, agonizing pain, and the death sentence being placed upon patients by terminal illness, "Death with

Dignity” is ultimately about having a choice. This choice gives patients the option to choose to fight to live or to die on their own terms. Both choices are honorable and legitimate. And it is the patient who deserves the right to make that decision.