

STEPS TO YOUR LIVING WILL (EVERYONE – THAT MEANS YOU– SHOULD HAVE ONE!)

Thank you for downloading this little report! It could save you and your family a world of heartache, pain, confusion—and expense!

A few years ago, the world watched an enormously complex medical, legal, ethical and political debate when Terri Shiavo was dying and her family could not agree what she would have wanted for her own medical care. Do you remember how awful that was? Members of Congress argued, people marched in the streets, her husband and her parents spent thousands of dollars on attorneys, and of course poor Terri was caught in the middle, locked in a coma with no opportunity to speak for herself.

Without taking *any position about the right outcome for her*, I want to share some information that would have made this tragedy completely avoidable. No family should ever go through that! And it will cost you nothing—not one penny, not a stamp, not a phone call, not a single thing—to avoid it and have your personal wishes and desires honored.

I am writing to remind myself, my loved ones (and now 40,000 subscribers to my newsletter and others on the web) that any of us could face a similar medical problem at any time. Remember, Terri was vibrant and healthy the afternoon before she was rushed to the hospital. Whatever happened to her was sudden and unexpected—like getting hit by the proverbial bus. Don't let that happen to you! The time to prepare is *NOW!* Fortunately, the legal, ethical, medical and emotional complexities are mostly—and easily—avoidable.

Recently, Mary and I watched as a family sadly but calmly experienced the opposite of Terri Shiavo's situation. A young friend of ours had a tragic fall and suffered severe head injuries. Unlike Terri's situation, Mark had often talked about his wishes with his

family and had signed a *Living Will*. While no one can imagine the pain the family experienced in losing Mark, at least there was no controversy, no recrimination and no anger between family members. They did what they all knew (and could prove!) he would have wanted.

BE SURE YOUR LOVED ONES NEVER HAVE TO WONDER WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO!

Here are the five easy steps to protect yourself and your loved ones:

FIRST -- Talk with your doctor, clergy, friends and family about your options. It's important that you make your decisions based on current and accurate information. This doesn't have to be time-consuming and you may already have plenty information from educating yourself and talking with people over the years. But you want to be confident that you know enough to live (and die) with your decisions.

SECOND -- Ask your doctor, hospital or local health department for a blank "Durable Power of Attorney", "Advanced Directive" or "Living Will." The appropriate forms go by different names in each state, but medical professionals will know exactly what you want and they usually have them readily available. My doctor's office has a stack of them right on the reception desk. You can also download forms at: <http://www.caringinfo.org/PlanningAhead> Be sure to check the box in the upper-right corner for forms and booklets related to your particular state or jurisdiction.

THIRD -- Fill it out and sign it. You may need to have it notarized so look for that in the small print. (Take it to your bank or lawyer or local court to have a Notary Public witness it for you. My bank does it free and it took less time than standing in line to make a deposit.)

FOURTH -- Talk about your decisions openly and often and *repeatedly* with the people you trust. For myself, that means talking about this with my wife and lots of other people. If the need arises, I don't want any mystery or confusion about "What would Phil want us to do?" Lots of folks will know, and they'll remember lots of conversations from lots of different times and places. They'll have formal, written documents but they'll also have memories of many

conversations over the years and one thing that will NOT happen is that there will be NO QUESTION and NO FIGHTING about it.

FIFTH -- Take comfort that if you ever change your mind, or if medical advances give you different options, you can ALWAYS update or replace these documents at any time, for any reason. The only issue here is that if you change your mind, it becomes even more important to TELL PEOPLE! Make sure everyone—every member of the family, your doctor, attorney, clergy, and friends all know what you want.

Write it down, talk about it, and why not make a video or audio recording to document your wishes and to help family members accurately recall what you said and wanted. Remember, if the time comes when they need to make a decision, everyone will be upset and when we're emotional our memories aren't as clear. Why not do everyone a favor and now, while things are calm and clear, have the conversation and record it for them! It's easy and while it will hopefully never be needed, if it is need, what a wonderful gift for your family! Whatever method or context works best, take action on this!

And, no excuses! If you "don't have time" to get an Advanced Directive from your doctor, sit down at the computer (right *NOW* would be a good time, since you're already here) and start typing. It doesn't have to be pretty, and you can fix the spelling another day. But put something in writing, print it out, sign it and give it to the people you love. You can always change and up-date it later.

When you do a more formal and thorough statement—replacing the quick initial statement you're going to do *right now!*—there are *three critical issues* you will want to think about and discuss with your family before putting your thoughts on paper as your formal statement.

The first is, what you want *done* at the end of your life in terms of medical care and what are sometimes called "extreme measures." Some people want everything possible to keep them breathing and keep their heart beating, while others are decide to avoid these "extraordinary" or "advanced" measures. Whatever is right for you and consistent with your personal beliefs, you must let people know.

The second issue is who will speak for you if you are unable to speak for yourself. If you are unconscious or cannot make thoughtful decisions about your care, you need to name the *one person* who will make your decisions for you. I say *one person* because asking the family as a whole, or a group of people to form a committee seems unfair and cumbersome. Name the person.

The third issue revolves around comfort and pain management. Some people resist heavy pain medication because it may sedate them, possibly adversely affecting their heart or breathing, while others want as much medication as it takes to make them comfortable. It's your choice; let people know.

Finally, you may want a statement about personal comfort and dignity. If wearing your own clothes or having personal items around is important to you, say so.

I highly recommend that you obtain and use a document that is approved in your state. For clarity and to keep everything legal and simple, it's important to meet the requirements in your jurisdiction, but for friends and family the *most important thing is knowing* what your choices are. Talk about it as a family, with friends, and especially with your spouse. And remember to have what many people find the hardest conversation of all. Ask your parents what they want. You might even give them a copy of this article! Once in a while a news item or a death in the family will provide a natural context for the conversation and that's great, but please don't "wait until the time is right!" That could be one day too late.

Remember, Terri Shiavo's situation tore the family apart for *fifteen years* (!), cost millions of dollars, got Congress involved, and the main problem was *not* legal or medical! The problem was that the people who loved Terri simply didn't know what she really wanted, and based on their various memories of her, they couldn't agree. Do not let that happen in your family!

For lots more information and to download forms that are valid in most states, visit: <http://www.caringinfo.org/PlanningAhead> and also visit <http://fivewishes.org> for more information.

Thanks for reading! I believe this is a critically important thing and I wish you a great day and a long, healthy and vibrant life!

*** A Request:

I believe this is so important that I would tremendously appreciate your passing it along. I ask, however, that you not modify it in any way and please, send an email inviting at least 10 friends, family, neighbors, co-workers or strangers to get their own copy at:

<http://philiphumbert.com/Free.htm>

*** Legal disclaimers:

Obviously, I am not an attorney and cannot give legal, medical, religious or other professional advice. For goodness sake, seek professional advice for your particular situation! Every state (and country) has slightly different requirements and your situation is unique. Use this short document as a place to start—and please START!—but then use it as motivation to talk with your physician and other experts. For the your family's sake, *do this right!*

At www.PhilipHumbert.com I have over 500 articles, several e-books, tips, tools and resources for your success. At *Resources for Success!* our mission is to help you design, create and live a life filled with “peace, passion, power, purpose and unusual prosperity.” Please visit my website, subscribe to my newsletter, and take advantage of the many tools we provide, including:

- Personal and business coaching
- Group coaching using our unique TEAM™ approach
- Public speaking, keynote addresses and corporate trainings
- Contact me personally at: Coach@philiphumbert.com