

We're All Going To Die

The question is: how?

We all hope for a long, healthy and happy life ... and when our time comes, we want our death to be easy. In a perfect world, after a long, happy day, we'd go to bed, fall asleep, and not wake up. Unfortunately, an easy death like that is very rare. For most of us, death comes at the end of a long process of disease and decline. And a great deal of pain and suffering comes along with it.

Life is precious ... so when we get ill, we fight. We try hard to stay healthy as long as we can. When we get ill, we take advantage of the miracles of modern medicine. Often, we find we can tolerate lots of pain and suffering ... more than we thought we could when we were healthy. But eventually, death becomes inevitable, and for most of us, our goal shifts from avoiding dying, to having a **good death**. An easy death. A death in which our pain and suffering are minimized.

The concept of having a good death is not new. It goes back thousands of years. Mostly, it's not controversial. The hospice movement is one outgrowth of this. Tenets of the hospice movement include: Minimize the dying patient's pain and suffering. Take advantage of all possible options for palliative care. Don't spare the pain medications. Forgo further medical treatments and procedures if they are likely to be futile and cause only more suffering. Have your loved ones with you. If possible and appropriate, die at home.

But palliative care can only do so much. The dying process can be torturous. Many of us who have been caregivers for dying loved ones know all about this. Cancer, stroke, heart disease, and neurological diseases like Parkinson's and ALS can cause immense, intolerable agonies. Often, it's not easy getting out of this world!

That's where death with dignity comes in. As a mentally competent adult, we might choose not to suffer through those final agonies. To have a peaceful death. To cut our suffering short. To make a "final exit". To hasten our death. When death is inevitable anyway .. often when death is very near ... why live through the final and so unpleasant stages of your bodily disintegration?

Every person is different ... and every situation is different. Not every dying process entails such great pain and suffering, and at that final stage, every one of us will have a different perspective. Hastening death is **never** an obligation. It's a **choice** that should be available to all of us, and that some of us will make.

The right to death with dignity -- the right to make a final exit in a peaceful, dignified and pain-free manner -- is one that should be available to all mentally competent adults. We view this as a fundamental human right.

Final Options Illinois – Advancing the right to death with dignity

1055 W. Bryn Mawr #F212, Chicago IL 60660 – 815-366-7942 or 224-565-1500

Check out our website at www.finaloptionsillinois.org or email us at info@finaloptionsillinois.org

Final Options Illinois supports all three major national groups working to advance the right to death with dignity:

Compassion & Choices – www.compassionandchoices.org – 800-247-7421

Final Exit Network – www.finalexitnetwork.org – 866-654-9156

and the **Death With Dignity National Center – www.deathwithdignity.org – 503-228-4415**

Yes, I want to support Final Options Illinois, to advance the right to death with dignity here in Illinois.

My contribution is \$_____ (contributions are tax-deductible)

Check enclosed, or Please charge my credit card _____

Expiration date: _____

Security code: _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ **Phone** _____

We need a death-with-dignity law right here in Illinois!

Final Options Illinois is proposing the Illinois Patient Choices at End of Life Act. Closely modeled after successful death with dignity legislation in Oregon, Washington and Vermont, our bill will provide a compassionate choice to the suffering terminally ill. The process starts when you request your physician to prescribe medication to hasten your death.

Two physicians must agree that you can be expected to die within six months, and that you are mentally competent and making an informed decision. (If there's any doubt, they must refer you to a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist to make certain.) It can't be an impulse. You must make three separate requests, two oral and one written, and you have to wait fifteen days after the first request and 48 hours after the second. You can change your mind at any time.

If every condition is met, your physician can write you a prescription ... and after that, it's up to you. In Oregon, where the law was first passed in 1994, a significant percentage of people who obtain the prescription never use it to hasten their death. Often, just knowing that you can cut your suffering short should it become intolerable, provides the courage to go on day by day.

Even without legal change, if you're suffering intolerably, the compassionate volunteers of the national group Final Exit Network can help. They can offer emotional support and education concerning end of life choices, including a method of peaceful self-deliverance for those who are suffering intolerably from incurable conditions who qualify for this service. And most important, if you do choose to hasten your death, they can provide a compassionate presence.

Final Exit Network (FEN) may be able to help even if you aren't "terminal" – in other words, even if your life expectancy is more than six months. Parkinson's, ALS and other neurological diseases often fit this profile. Or you might be in the very early stages of dementia. For more information or to apply for this service, please call **866-654-9156**.

So please send your most generous contribution to Final Options Illinois, to help make death with dignity a legal right in Illinois. We also recommend joining and supporting any and all of the three major national groups, **Compassion and Choices (www.compassionandchoices.org)**, **Final Exit Network (www.finalexitnetwork.org)** and the **Death With Dignity National Center (www.deathwithdignity.org)**. Also, visit the website of our movement's founder, Derek Humphry, at **www.finalexit.org**, and subscribe to the ERGO News Email list, a wonderful worldwide clipping service.

There are never any charges for Final Exit Network's services ... but they are only for members. We strongly recommend that everybody join. You'll help make death with dignity a fundamental human right and you'll support this extremely valuable service.

We don't use the terms suicide, assisted-suicide or physician-assisted suicide to refer to the process of making a final exit. In our society, suicide is typically taken to mean the irrational act of a depressed or mentally ill person. That's not what death with dignity is about. Sparing yourself from your final agonies is a fully rational, humane and wise choice.

There are people and institutions that oppose the right to death-with-dignity. Some are opposed for religious reasons. Some are worried about a "slippery slope", in which old, infirm or disabled people would be encouraged or forced to end their lives. Some are concerned about the role of doctors.

To those who oppose this right, we say, our movement is about individual choice and control. We have no wish to impose hastened death on anyone. And years of experience in Oregon and in European countries with death-with-dignity laws prove that no one is being pressured to end their life. Death-with-dignity laws include stringent protections against such coercion.

Regarding doctors, we say that a doctor's duty is two-fold. First, to heal, and second, to relieve suffering. When death is imminent, we should be able to call on our doctors for assistance. Many compassionate doctors and nurses have always done this ... but it's been hidden. It should be legal, upfront and open.

Please join us. If you support the right to death with dignity ... if you want this choice to be available to yourself and your loved ones, please join us. We're making tremendous progress in establishing this fundamental human right in states across the US and around the world. It's the support and involvement of each of us that will make the difference. Thank you!