

My Testimony

I understand what it's like to feel overwhelmed, sad, and unsure of what to do next. My mom was diagnosed with metastatic cancer which had spread to her liver. I understand having lots of questions, being busy with family and work obligations and not knowing where to start. I went with my mom to all of her doctor's appointments to ensure she got all of her questions answered about her diagnosis and her treatment options. She had been through treatment with stage III breast cancer 20 years prior and understood this was different. Due to it being terminal, she decided not to do aggressive treatment and instead opted for immunotherapy which had fewer side effects and allowed her to live independently and have a better quality of life. Her doctor estimated she had 6-12 months, but she lived 16 months after the diagnosis and was able to travel and enjoy time with family and friends. She never had to go to the emergency room or the hospital. As her disease progressed, she developed symptoms of diabetes. As a nurse, I was able to teach her how to check her blood sugar and give herself insulin, so she was able to continue to live on her own. She started on hospice at this point so a nurse could monitor and manage her symptoms and a social worker and chaplain could provide emotional support as she continued to live on her own an hour away from family. After a fall, she came to live with my family. After eight months on hospice, she died peacefully at home with loved ones by her side.

Thankfully, my parents had met with an attorney and had their financial and medical POA paperwork and living wills in place and had planned and pre-paid for their funerals. My mom had started conversations with me years before to help me get more comfortable talking about death and dying. We had open discussions about her end of life wishes so, I totally supported her decision to not pursue aggressive treatment.

Because my mom had done advanced care planning and had had conversations with my brother and me about her end of life wishes, we were able to enjoy more time together and she was able to maintain control during her illness. She gave us a wonderful gift by making these plans ahead of time and sharing them with us, so we didn't have to guess if we were making decisions she would be happy with.

I hope by sharing my mom's story, it will help to inspire other families to begin talking with their loved ones about their wishes and make end of life care planning a priority!

As your Aging Life Care Manager, I will be there every step of the way to advocate, educate, coordinate, assist with transitions and provide comfort, so you won't be alone in getting answers and developing a plan to provide the best care possible for you or your loved one.

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