

Helping my Dad make plans for his death

When my Dad was diagnosed with lung cancer he was determined that life would continue as per usual, only allowing for the inconveniences that having treatment entailed. His quirky sense of humour helped all of us who loved him to deal with what was happening. He would tell me about his group of friends who met two or three times a week in the local pub, each one of them had some kind of serious illness and they would place bets on which one outlasted the other. They would actually collect on these bets too!



After about a year he stopped responding to treatment and had to come to terms with the fact that he wasn't going to live much longer. His health rapidly deteriorated as the cancer spread and he could no longer do lots of the things he had enjoyed and taken for granted, such as spending time on the computer, reading and writing.

My Dad had always been a little unconventional so I was not surprised that he had certain ideas about planning for the end of his life. My Dad asked me to ensure that his wishes were honoured and to write these out, this was more difficult than it may first appear as some of his wishes didn't fit with my ideas of giving him a good send off.

What would work for Dad (hopes)	What would not work for Dad (fears)	My perspective
To make all the decisions about what happened once he had died.		I was really pleased that my Dad was still able to make decisions and that he was clear about what he wanted to happen. He couldn't really see things from my perspective and thought I was being silly.
Plan a) leave his body to medical science if they could take him, however, sometimes they are full and cannot! Plan b) If he can't leave his body to medical	To pay for a burial he wouldn't be there to enjoy!	Plan a) this was practical and would benefit others but I wanted somewhere that I could go to remember, this wouldn't afford this. Plan b) At least I would get my

<p>science then the cheapest funeral possible is to be arranged. No one must attend this funeral as he won't be really there!</p>		<p>dad's ashes, and I was appalled at the thought of no one turning up to a funeral. This was really upsetting for me.</p>
<p>That his funeral didn't interrupt anyone's normal routines.</p>	<p>To have a ceremony or wake.</p>	<p>Although my Dad was raised a Catholic he had developed an aversion to anything remotely religious, therefore any kind of service would have been false. A funeral is part of the whole process of grieving as well as having the opportunity to celebrate life, so how would we say goodbye? How would I support my children to come to terms with the loss of their Grandad if they didn't have the opportunity to share stories at the funeral? What about all of his friends, he was a popular man? Would people think I didn't think enough of him to give him a good send off?</p>
<p>That his mates raise a drink to his memory.</p>	<p>For this to be formal in any way.</p>	<p>Again I was conscious of what others might think.</p>

We considered these wishes and what I saw as the impact of them on me and my children and agreed a way forward.

- 1) I would complete the request to leave my Dad's body to medical science, he struggled to write at this point but could just about sign his name.
- 2) I would follow the contingency plan to the letter and promised not to come to the funeral should there be one.
- 3) I would leave £100 behind the bar of both of his favourite pubs with the instruction that Tony Noon had bought his last round of

drinks and that was enough, there was no way he was paying for a wake that he wouldn't be able to get drunk at!

- 4) Should there be a cremation, I could have the ashes (this was a hard fought concession).
- 5) My Dad would leave enough money to pay for me and the kids to spend a day at an amusement park to celebrate his life as this was one of the things he most enjoyed doing with them.



When my Dad passed away plan b) came into effect and he had his cremation exactly how he had planned it. I got the ashes and my friend bought me a tree which blossomed during the month he died. His friends raised several glasses to him in the local pubs. I used the money he had left to take my three children to Alton Towers for the weekend. We stayed in the chocolate room and had a wonderful time reminiscing about Grandad. Years later, my

kids still talk about this positively. My tree flowers every March and we pour a can of Guinness into the pot on Fathers day and Christmas, he wasn't one for birthdays!