

Any act that protects life is sacred. Technology that is dedicated to life-saving purposes acquires sanctity as well, and its use becomes a holy act.

—Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi in *Jewish with Feeling: A Guide to Meaningful Jewish Practice*

What Friends Are For

Climbing the “Hidden Staircase” of Health-Care Proxies

Because of what happened to Terry Schiavo, many people are filling out living wills and durable powers of attorney. In my experience as a nurse and a pastor, I know that this can mark the beginning of a long staircase to climb with another person — a staircase hidden by a curtain of silence because most of us are reluctant to speak about death. So what should you do if a family member or friend asks you to be their health-care proxy?

1. Acknowledge the honor. Signing a power of attorney creates a sacred bond between persons, giving you unprecedented authority to direct another’s medical care. You are a protector entrusted to ensure that the medical-care choices listed on a directive will be carried out — from the moment your friend becomes too weak to speak to the day he either recovers or dies.

2. Have a thorough conversation. Find out all you can about your friend’s personal experience of illness and death. Find out if he has a religious affiliation and how that fits in with his approach to medical care and end-of-life decisions. Make sure the two of you have a shared and correct understanding of the medical procedures listed on the directive.

3. Convey to family members that decisions have been made and give them copies of the documents. Ask for their support, encourage them to air their concerns, and stress the authority of the proxy.

4. Convince persons who are hospitalized to have copies of the appropriate documents on their medical chart. When it’s time to implement the living-will directive, make certain the patient’s medical choices match the orders written by the doctor; only direc-

tives specifically written on the physician’s order sheet will be carried out.

— Rev. Patricia C. Cashman

If You Want Him to Trust You, Wear His Team’s Jersey

“One must be fond of people and trust them if one is not to make a mess of life,” wrote E. M. Forster. But a new Ohio State University study suggests that the factors determining whom we trust are quite different for men and women.

In an experiment involving 147 college students, most exhibited a fairly high degree of trust in strangers. However, the men were far more likely to trust strangers who were members of an identifiable group to which they themselves belonged, such as a university, club, team, or business. The women were more likely to trust a stranger who had a personal connection to someone close to them, such as the friend of a friend or relative.

These findings suggest that men are not necessarily less social than women, as they are reputed to be, but that they seek symbolic connections — our group versus theirs — while women tend to trust members of their network of relationships. The implications of the study are significant, because the decision to trust, and the way we go about it, are basic to our ability to form and sustain relationships, both business and personal.

—Ann Stapleton