



End of Life Care Plans Provide Relief and Healing.

By Mireille Hayden, Gentle Dusk.

As professionals we always think of advance care planning as providing choice and control to patients whilst enabling us to deliver the best care at the end of life. The reality of working with someone on their advance care plan shows that the impact is even greater. “Our Future Matters programme in Islington delivers over 100 consultations a year with 60 end of life care plans being put in place” says Mireille Hayden, Senior Partner at Gentle Dusk. “But that’s just the numbers. There are some really heartfelt stories behind our work, stories of people being truly touched by writing their plans”.

Caitlin is a lovely Irish lady with a really warm and kind manner. She is so positive about putting her end of life care plans in place she wants to tell the world. You can’t help but feel a hint of regret though when you hear her story; regret that families aren’t quite perfect or family members always kind to each other and regret that you can’t make things better.

Caitlin lives in Islington and is married to John who is 63. They are both from Ireland and from talking to Caitlin you can hear it’s a significant part of who she is and ultimately linked to a painful past.

Caitlin heard about Future Matters from her friend who attends an exercise class at Age UK Islington. Her friend told her that she could get advice about “wills and that side of things” and that she could make an appointment. Caitlin’s main reason for coming to Future Matters was because she is 71 and her husband is 63 and they often think “oh my God if something happens to one of us what would the other one do? I wouldn’t know where to turn?!” Before making her plans it was all a real worry for her. She rang up Future Matters Islington and made an appointment where she met Maisy one of the Age UK volunteers trained by Gentle Dusk “ I felt completely comfortable and at ease with Maisy. I didn’t feel judged or anything

negative from her about my story. She was open minded and took everything I said on board”.



Caitlin and John are estranged from their families. “We are Irish and even still in Ireland they don’t take too graciously to being married, divorced and then remarried. It has caused a lot of family problems. I have bent over backwards trying to make amends for something that happened over 40 years ago. I am now in a situation where I have no contact with my children, grandchildren or anyone in my family.” Caitlin tried to make contact and amends again 2 years ago but to no avail. She feels her family try to punish her and she’s had to resign herself to letting go of them. “So I want it made clear that I don’t want any of them to come to my funeral, I want it written down: I don’t want them to be there when I’m dead if they cannot be here when I’m alive”. You can sense the strength of feeling from Caitlin “I know that sounds terrible but that’s where I’m at, at the moment anyway”.

Caitlin has completed an Advance Care Plan with Maisy. She has written down where and how she wants to be cared for at the end of her life and key wishes around her funeral. This has helped her greatly in putting the past to rest. ” I feel like I’m being heard with something I have had a problem with all my life, people just don’t take any notice in my family of what I say. I’m irrelevant and so now I’ve written this down and given a copy to my doctor”.



Caitlin also had an appointment for the free wills advice at Age UK Islington and has finalised her will. “I was so pleased with doing all my plans that I sent my husband to write his Advance Care plan too!” says Caitlin “It’s a great relief to have it all done”. And the team at Gentle Dusk and Age UK Islington, is really happy to have helped her too.

For more information on Future Matters Islington call 020 7281 6018, email future.matters@ageukislington.co.uk or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/islington/information--advice/future-matters

For Information about Future Matters and how you can implement the programme in your area, commission the training or join our train the trainer programme contact info@gentledusk.org.uk or visit www.gentledusk.org.uk.