



How an End-of-Life Doula Can Help You

By Morgan Everitt

In end-of-life care, each individual's experience is as unique as their own life story. Though the following case study is just one example, I hope it can shed some light on how doulas integrate into care teams and help families through such a challenging time.

Years ago, I had been working with the Deckers for a while when I received the call that Madeline, the matriarch who was on hospice, was experiencing severe agitation. Her husband, Chet, was unable to calm her down.

Being that they were both 97 years old and living at home, they had a wonderful live-in caretaker, Kate. After I arrived and checked in with Chet and Madeline, Kate and I discussed how to help them through the night. It looked like Madeline's time was near.

We took turns sitting with Madeline, speaking to her gently and brushing her hair. She fell asleep, and Kate and I continued our nightly

watch so Madeline wouldn't be alone. In the morning, I debriefed Chet, his adult daughter Christine, and their hospice nurse. The hospice nurse was attentive and kind, making sure Madeline was as comfortable as possible. When it was time for her to go, she was glad to know Madeline would have so much support.

I helped Chet and Christine become more comfortable with attending to Madeline and guided them in ways they could connect with her. Christine didn't want to be there when Madeline passed, as it would be too difficult. I understood completely and assured her I would stay in touch and keep her updated.

Chet and I sat with Madeline while he told me stories about their 75 years together. As Madeline's condition changed, I explained to Chet what her body was going through.

Soon after, Madeline's breathing slowed and eventually stopped. I brought some flowers over to Chet, and he placed one in Madeline's hand.

I called Christine, and she came back quickly. Explaining how the last moments had gone,

I answered any questions she had. I then contacted hospice and arranged for the next steps.

I had the honor of being Chet's doula when he passed, just one year later.

A word from Christine: "Morgan was such a comfort to all of us. She is wonderful at this work. Truly amazing. You will wonder how you would ever go through this without her."

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Morgan is a certified end of life doula serving Bucks County, Pa.

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