

## “MIH”: Make It Happen

Part 2 of 4 Articles

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Where we were at the end of Part 1 of this series was this: people in need of legal help with ongoing dementia issues should talk to professionals about what to do. They should not procrastinate. Do it now.

When you talk to your lawyer (or should the lawyer be that of your mom or dad or spouse with dementia issues), be sure to present the lawyer with the following information: a family tree so that he/she will know who is who, copies of any Powers of Attorney, Wills, Living Wills, or health care proxies that the adult with the dementia problems may have signed already.

Of course, please read these documents before you speak with the lawyer so that you will understand (not necessarily agree with) what is being planned and can ask questions for clarity and can suggest changes.

When you speak with a lawyer (and this is SOOOOOO important) try to have a goal in mind that you want help with i.e., referrals to health care providers, a list of persons the lawyer would recommend being put in charge of health care decisions, financial decisions, and the like. Obviously, the ultimate goal is to have plans for the person living with dementia's life and then to have a will in place which identifies what is called a *personal representative* to take charge of things in the name of the family member, should that person die. That will **MUST** be made while the person is arguably competent to make a will. Such a person must know the general nature of his/her property and the natural objects of his/her estate (i.e. families).

Lastly, have the face-to-face meeting with the lawyer. Listen more than you talk. Get advice. Write it down. Take detailed notes.

Then go home and speak with your spouse or significant other with dementia and try to get his/her view.

Then please try to go to the person with dementia and have the hard discussion: articulate what you think needs to be done and when. Be prepared for push back, which is why you need as much preparation and clarity on the plans as you can muster.

Expect that the person living with dementia will say one or more of the following:

- 1) “you are just trying to take or steal my money”
- 2) “I don’t need your help”
- 3) “Are you saying I am crazy? I raised you and you can’t speak to me that way”
- 4) “I will get my own lawyer.”

The key here for you, the family member, is to NOT argue with the person who is mildly or more seriously battling dementia and to just LISTEN. Stay the course that you set yourself on and then inform everyone what you NEED to do based on the lawyer’s advice. DO not keep the plans a secret because secrets always come out and then lead to litigation either before or after death or both.

“Part 3” to follow soon!