

The Washington Post
38 Assisted Suicides
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Picture yourself in this situation. You go to the doctor for a routine physical. You look fine. You feel good. All those exhausting workouts at the gym are finally starting to pay off and you actually stuck to that low fat, high vitamin diet you're doctor recommended. You have never felt better. You are essentially the epitome of a healthy, fit human being. Then, out of nowhere, you are diagnosed with a disorder of the nervous system accompanied by chronic fatigue syndrome. The illness is permanent and there is no cure. It will only progress and worsen with time, and all you can do is wait. What would you do?

If you were 42-year-old Judith Curren, a nurse and mother of two small children, you'd be in close contact with the infamous suicide assessor, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a.k.a. "Doctor Death," discussing your "options." However, according to an editorial published in The Washington Post, entitled "38 Assisted Suicides," many people believe that when it comes to matters such as life and death, there are no options. The decision to live or die is made by God. Judith Curren didn't agree. With the assistance of Dr. Kevorkian, she died and the retired pathologist presided at his 38th assisted suicide, fairly confident that he will not be prosecuted or even suffer public disapproval.

Many of the people who have sought out Dr. Kevorkian have been terribly ill and suffering, with no hope of long-term survival. Their stories offered examples that built public sympathy for this cause. But from the beginning, even among observers who believe that the desperately sick should be given help to die, there have been questionable cases. For example, a woman in her fifties allegedly suffering from early Alzheimer's disease was fit enough to play tennis with her adult son shortly before dying. Another- said to have had a painful, progressive illness-was found to be free of disease by the county medical examiner.

The article argued this point, "Is it in any way merciful, compassionate, or 'healing' (a favorite word of Kevorkian fans) to assist in the suicide of a middle-aged woman who is

tired and depressed and married to a man whom she recently accused of attacking her and who then delivers her to Dr. Kevorkian? Pain is controllable. Depression and fatigue can be ameliorated by drugs. Violent husbands can be prosecuted and divorced.

Suicide in such a case is unreasonable. A doctor's help in that course is unconscionable."

I had mixed feelings on this editorial because I take into consideration both sides of the argument. On one hand I understand Judith Curren's decision. I can imagine what it must feel like to wake up perfectly healthy and have your whole life in front of you, and in the next minute be told you have an incurable disease and that it's going to eventually kill you. Living with that thought alone would be too much for me. Here's a woman that did everything right. It just doesn't seem fair that she will never see her children grow up, she will not be able to continue her career in nursing and help save other's lives, she will not be around when the scientists celebrate finding a cure for the disease that claimed her life. In many ways, this woman has suffered enough. Why prolong the inevitable and possible pain and suffering that will escalate with time? As humanitarians, we should want to put this woman out of her misery.

But fortunately or unfortunately, there is another side to us. One that wants to be strong and hold on for just a little bit longer. One who believes they will be the first cured when science makes another medical breakthrough. A side that wants to raise it's children instead of watching over them. I believe, for most people, this stronger, more powerful side will conquer death and reinstate hope. After all, life is the most valuable gift we have, and there shouldn't be any two sides to that.

