

If It Kills Me, It Kills Me

Category: Drinking

written by Brenda Shorkend | November 4, 2019

He was my doppelganger: where I could go if I chose drink over life. I was his advocate, supporter, commiserator. I supported him in his choice to drink himself to death, and it was one of the hardest and most meaningful journeys I have had with any of my clients. I will always be proud of the fact that I was able to bring together a team that supported his right to live life on his own terms.

"I like to drink, I want to drink, I don't want to die, but if it kills me, it kills me." This was his mantra. He knew to emphasize that he was not suicidal. And we, on our part, tried every trick in the book to reduce his drinking, but he was simply not interested.

After all, he told us, he used to drink two bottles of bourbon a day, and now he only drank one bottle of wine. Of course, that "one" was a 1500 ml bottle, which actually equals two bottles.

As his care manager, I had to advocate strongly with his physician. She still thought she could save him and was refusing to enroll him in hospice.

It was apparent that he was carrying with him the scars of childhood trauma and that he had been self-medicating with alcohol, extreme sports and young companions from a very early age. By the time I met him, with alcohol-induced dementia and liver failure setting in, it was decades too late to deal with all of this.

As long as he had enough wine available, he was fine, and with a wicked sense of humor. He swore like a sailor. I knew that he was in severe pain when he stopped swearing and started thanking people for his care. The superlative care he received from his caregivers and from the hospice nurses ensured that he was comfortable and we were so relieved when his pain subsided and his vocabulary regained its former color. He did not seem to regret his choices, even at the very end. He died peacefully with his two cats and beloved people at his side.

My hope is that when my time comes, I have people around me who honor me and both my good and my bad habits, and allow me to live and die on my terms.

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