



their families through the process in a mindful and attentive manner. End-of-life doulas do not replace homecare staff and hospice staff; we collaborate in providing care.

Ask your doula if they are multicensured and how they can assist you. Being a state-certified social worker, I have hospice experience that enables me to help with clients' planning stages, putting important decisions into place while they're still healthy. Should you need an end-of-life doula's services when death is near, that's okay too. We can help you put into place what you need based upon what you want. As part of my program, I also extend services to significant others and family members as needed to help them adjust to life without their loved one.

I've been helping seniors for over 15 years in the healthcare industry in a variety of venues. It's my honor and pleasure to be included in someone's journey. Everybody's idea of what our end journey should look like is unique. Planning gives you the power to have your decisions in place and not someone else's.

Melissa Hansen, CSW, EOLD is a doula and owner of Final Journey Companions, LLC. Follow Melissa on Facebook, contact her at (920) 404-1855 or finaljourneycompanionsllc@gmail.com.



It's in the PLANNING

BY MELLISSA HANSEN, CSW, EOLD

We're all born into this world, and will all leave it one day. And while we plan for many of life's events—baby showers, birthdays, graduations, weddings, etc.—we frequently don't plan for the final one.

Why do we find it so hard to talk about death? Why not take control of the decisions so we can make known what's important to us? What if your family can't agree or remember your wishes for medical treatments? Are you willing to have a feeding tube or be placed on a respirator to keep you alive? How do you want to leave this world and have your loved ones remember you? Planning can help your end-of-life journey be peaceful, filled with joyful memories, and beautiful for you and your

family rather than filled with anxiety, confusion, and stress.

One of the most common comments I hear from seniors is "I don't want to be a burden to my family." Even if you haven't begun, there's time to plan for your death. There are many decisions to make and several important documents you need to have in place while you're still healthy. Planning sooner means it's easier to make good decisions because you're more capable of understanding them. You don't want to wait until you're ill because it will affect how good your decisions will be. Planning ahead also takes the burden off you and your family during a crisis situation, which relieves stress and anxiety. When we're not feeling well,

we should be visiting with loved ones, making lasting memories, and enjoying the time we have left. The final journey should be a time of comfort.

I represent Final Journey Companions, LLC, in the Fox Valley area, and am honored to be an end-of-life doula. End-of-life doula services are nonmedical, holistic approaches to end-of-life care. The goal is to act as a companion so people aren't afraid, alone, or unprepared for death. We provide a thoughtful, nonjudgmental, and proactive approach to supporting, guiding, and empowering a client to the best quality end-of-life care. Each doula's background may be different, but all work with clients and



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