

Powerful Patient #17

Host: Joyce Graff, WebTalkRadio.net

Advocating for Yourself and Others

Fran P. agreed more than ten years ago to be the Health Care Proxy for her friend Lisa. Lisa was 34 and healthy, and Fran was glad to do this for her friend, but frankly thought she would never be called upon to do anything. But life happens, and recently Lisa needed her. Fran shares her experience, and what she learned about being a Health Care Proxy, and why everyone needs one.



Fantastic Frank and friends

We also speak with Frank R. Johnson of New York state. After building a career as an entrepreneur and as a chemist with one of the largest corporations in the country, an accident brought him to earth. He survived a fire, bankruptcy, and divorce, and had to learn to speak all over again. Most important, he had to rebuild his self-esteem and learn to believe in himself. His mission is to share that knowledge and skill with others, especially young people.

1) About Our Guests

Fran P. is a friend of mine here in Boston.

Frank R. Johnson, otherwise known as Fantastic Frank, has a website where he tells people about his disability, and “never give up on your dreams!” <http://www.fantasticfrank.com/> He is launching a series of comic books at <http://youngexplorersadventures.com/> where you can preview the first several pages of the first comic book. His dream is to see these comics become a series of films.

2) Health Care Proxy

The rules around Health Care Proxy and Living Will vary widely from state to state. In general, a Living Will deals only with giving instructions for what people should do if you are incapacitated by injury. A Health Care Proxy, on the other hand, is a legal document naming an individual who is authorized to speak with your doctors about your condition, and if necessary to make decisions in your name if you are unable to speak or participate in your own care.

Before the HIPAA laws, a close relative who came to the hospital and asked to speak with the doctor was usually granted permission to do so. Nowadays, however, no one even in your family who is not your legal spouse cannot speak with the doctors about your medical care unless you give specific permission for them to do so. In other words, if you do not appoint a Health Care Proxy, the hospital personnel will make decisions

without your input. Your partner, unless he or she is your legal spouse, may be denied access to the doctors, and possibly even to the Intensive Care Unit.

The easiest and least expensive way to create a Health Care Proxy is to pick up the paperwork from your local hospital. To find a Notary Public, go to your bank and inquire. If you have an account at the bank, they will usually notarize documents for you without charge.

You can find other sources of help on the internet. One company that is prepared to create a document for whatever state you live in is <http://www.legalzoom.com>

While we all hope you do not need your Health Care Proxy to make life and death decisions for you, it is always a good idea to have a philosophical discussion with this person about your wishes should you be in a situation where you are on life-support machines. Would you want the doctors to keep trying? Up to what point? When would you agree that life support should be turned off?

3) Believe in Yourself

Fantastic Frank R. Johnson is on a mission to help people believe in themselves and appreciate their own talents. Everyone has hidden talents, that you may not even realize you have until you are put to the test.

Frank has been a volunteer for www.compeer.com for nearly 30 years, working as a peer counselor with other disabled people. His secret is to focus on what you CAN do, and not keep worrying about what you CAN'T do any more. OK, so it doesn't work. Now what are you going to do?

Get out there and do it!