



MAiD in Practice

Virtual Conference 2024

*Enhancing Psychosocial Support
for the MAiD Journey*

*“Now What?”
Bringing It All Together*

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Case Study #1: April

Presenting Factors:

- **Age and Family:** April is a 46-year-old immigrant woman from a cultural background where MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying) is not widely accepted. She is single and childless. She has advanced multiple sclerosis (MS) and a history of depression, with her condition rapidly worsening.
- **Medical Status:** April's MS has significantly impaired her physical abilities and quality of life. She faces increasing difficulty with daily tasks and experiences severe emotional and physical challenges.



Social/Contextual Factors:

- **Family Dynamics:** April feels isolated due to strained family relationships. Her mother, who was a central figure in her life, passed away less than a year ago. This loss has exacerbated her health issues and strained her relationship with her stepdad and siblings. She has minimal contact with her family and relies primarily on online friends and personal support workers (PSWs) for emotional and practical support.
- **Emotional and Social Impact:** April experiences feelings of being a burden, loneliness, and exhaustion. She struggles with discussing MAiD with her support network, which has been met with discomfort or disapproval.
- **Support Challenges:** April is conflicted about discussing her MAiD decision with her family, who oppose it based on cultural and spiritual beliefs. She also feels guilty about considering MAiD, influenced by cultural values that emphasize enduring suffering and the sanctity of life.

Key Points:

- **Cultural Beliefs:** April comes from a cultural background where MAiD is often viewed as contrary to traditional values that emphasize enduring hardship and the sanctity of life. Spiritual beliefs may include seeing suffering as a part of a divine plan, adding complexity to her decision.
- **Spiritual Practices:** Traditional spiritual practices in her culture may include rituals or beliefs about death and the afterlife, which may conflict with her choice for MAiD. April might need to navigate these spiritual expectations alongside her personal decision.
- **Community Expectations:** There are strong community and familial expectations regarding end-of-life issues, including reliance on traditional practices and a focus on family support rather than medical interventions like MAiD. April may feel pressured to conform to these expectations despite her personal struggles.
- **Immigrant Experience:** As an immigrant, April may lack access to familiar cultural support systems and face challenges in finding culturally competent healthcare services. The cultural dissonance between her background and the principles of MAiD adds another layer of complexity to her decision-making process.

Case Study #2: Brian and Michael

Presenting Factors:

- **Age and Family:** Brian (67) and Michael (65) have been married for 30 years, navigating societal challenges as a gay couple. They have two adult sons from Brian's previous marriage and two young grandchildren. Their relationship has endured discrimination and family tensions related to their sexuality.
- **Medical Status:** Michael's cancer is at an advanced stage with few treatment options left. He has chosen to delay MAiD for 2-3 months to allow for planning and for Brian to emotionally adjust. The decision for MAiD follows many intimate discussions about Michael's autonomy, dignity, and the kind of death he desires. Both view this decision as a continuation of their struggle for control and agency as a couple.



Social/Contextual Factors:

- **Family Dynamics:** Brian and Michael's relationship with Brian's sons has been strained. Although the sons were raised in an 2SLGBTQIA+ affirming household, societal pressures have created a complex dynamic. Michael, as a stepfather, has been an important figure but is sometimes kept at a distance. Brian worries that Michael's decision for MAiD might intensify these tensions and create further rifts in their fragile family relationships.
- **Emotional and Social Impact:** Brian is managing the emotional burden of being Michael's primary caregiver while also grieving the impending loss of his partner. Their life together has been marked by resilience against societal expectations. Brian now feels immense pressure to maintain strength for Michael and their family. He is conflicted about sharing Michael's decision to pursue MAiD, fearing judgment from both within and outside the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
- **Support Challenges:** Brian and Michael have a close-knit group of 2SLGBTQIA+ friends who understand their societal struggles. However, they face opposition from some family members, particularly Brian's eldest son, who is conflicted due to religious beliefs. Brian fears this opposition could lead to estrangement, especially if his sons view MAiD as giving up hope.

Key Points:

- **Medical Condition:** Michael has terminal cancer with limited treatment options and has planned for MAiD in 2–3 months. Brian is his primary caregiver and emotional support.
- **Family:** Married for 30 years, Brian and Michael have two adult sons and two young grandchildren. As a gay couple, they've faced unique challenges and discrimination, and now MAiD has added further complexities to family communication.
- **Current Situation:** Brian is struggling with the emotional toll of caregiving, preparing for life without his partner, and navigating conversations with his family, fearing both emotional backlash and renewed estrangement due to Michael's MAiD decision.