Delving Into the Complexities of Violet Weston

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Background

After the loss of her husband, Violet's daughters confront her about her substance abuse problems. Violet has constant mood swings, where she is suddenly happy, sad, or angry at different times, lashing out at her daughters and other family members at inappropriate times, behavior that is not fully consistent with losing a loved one. Violet was married to her husband, Beverly, for several years, but did state that he did cheat on her with younger women, and while they did not separate, they were not together at the time. Her husband was also a chronic alcoholic for over fifty years and his addiction was so severe that he would arrive at public events drunk when he was the person of interest. For over thirty years, Violet knew that her nephew was actually technically her stepson due to her husband's infidelity but never told Beverly that she knew he had a child with her sister. When Weston's husband committed suicide, she might have had the chance to prevent it but she said she "did not have the wit's about her" because of all of the pills she was taking. After her children moved out, Weston often got abused substances but she supposedly recovered from her addiction for a while. After Weston received a cancer diagnosis, Weston began taking narcotics again, including Valium, Vicodin, Darvon, Darvocet, Percodan, Percocet, Xanax "for fun", Oxycontin "in a pinch", and Dilaudid. As a child, Violet's mother had an obvious favorite and she states that she learned to live with it. Violet also states that she had a rotten childhood and that only two people understood her: her late husband, and her sister. Violet feels as though she has no one to depend on. Violet's daughters have admitted her to a psych ward against her will before. As she has aged, Violet has had negative thoughts about herself and her self-image which she seems to project onto her daughters as well. Violet's mother seemed to be abusive according to Violet's description of her,

Violet stating that she was a “mean, nasty old lady.” All of Weston’s kids left her days after the passing of her husband.

Literature Review

Dying is a natural thing and no one can escape it. Death is inevitable and yet when people have to confront it, people have a hard time coping with it. Having struggles with coping with dying is completely understandable; it is an inconceivable concept that you live to die. This concept is also one of the downfalls of cancer, it can be a slow death or it can be a fast death.

Violet Weston is dying a fairly slow death with little to no family after her husband committed suicide and her children have all left. Nonetheless, Violet does have a caregiver that her husband hired just before his death. In the wake of her husband's death, Violet’s children have all come home just to leave a few days later in the worst moments of Violet’s illness. The *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine* has proved that someone having the support of someone else while they are dying reduces the amount of pain a person is in at the end of their life. In Violet’s situation,like many others’, when there is a lot of animosity within one’s family, having a supportive person, even if they are not a relative, is important. Dying is a daunting enough feat, but when one is also facing the possibility of being alone while dying, the situation becomes even more dire.

Growing up, Violet did not live in a healthy home and she herself did not have a healthy marriage or conduct a healthy household for her children. Violet’s health had declined even before her cancer diagnosis, Violet has been addicted to opioids for many years. In addition to Violet’s hardships, she has just lost her husband, who she might not have always agreed with but loved nonetheless, to suicide in the most difficult moments of her diagnosis. Violet had been with her husband for decades despite his infidelity and had him as a constant companion. As she got

older, Violet has become more cynical in relation to herself and her appearance; this could be from her husband's constant infidelity with younger women. Weston projects the negative feelings from her husband's infidelity onto herself and oftentimes her children as well, constantly insulting her daughters and herself and only giving compliments when she is reminiscing on the past.

Violet has destroyed most of her familial relationship and there is a very slim possibility that they will come back after her husband's funeral. Essentially, the only person left for Violet would be the social worker. Having the reliability of someone being on your side without being related to you can also be a relief. Having a family caretaker can inflict added stress and strain that is added onto the family, but Violet's family is mentally or emotionally adept or willing to be her caretakers. If Violet does want to repair the relationship she had with her family, the stress of taking care of someone with terminal cancer can be counterintuitive to the efforts of rebuilding a relationship. It might also be difficult for Violet's family to care for her in the wake of her husband's death. Weston's daughters just lost their father and now they are watching their mother also die of a slow, excruciating disease.

Social Work Implications

End of life care for someone that has no support system can bring them peace of mind in their last few moments they have, whether that be hours, days, or months. After the loss of her husband and her daughters leaving as well, Violet is left without any support system. With a social worker, Violet will not be alone. Violet will experience fewer spikes of fear, pain, and denial at the end of Violet's life. *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine*® outlines this concept in their journal entry "Fear, Pain, Denial, and Spiritual Experiences in Dying Processes." This care aligns with a key component of the National Association of Social Workers

Code of Ethics: importance of human relationship. Having someone there for emotional support as one goes through all of the painful components that come with dying is important. People die everyday, so there is always going to be a demand for social workers who work in end of life care. Providing someone the care and attention they need as they are fighting cancer is essential to their care. Cancer is an exhausting disease and needs to be fought with tremendous amounts of strength that Violet does not seem to have all by herself. With a social worker there to support Violet, she could gain the strength to go forward with her treatments.

Conclusion

Dying is an inevitable part of life that no one can run from. Sometimes we cannot control how we die. Death can be sudden and without any warning, and other times it can be a slow process that can be even more painful if one is aware of their upcoming death. No matter the situation, it is just as devastating the loss that one experiences because of death. Violet was dying a slow death that was slowly stripping away her freedoms that she once had. Violet was also alone in this process of dying; her daughters had left and her husband had died shortly before. Providing Violet Weston with someone to be with her at the end of her life, will provide her with clarity and peace in however much time she has left. As a social worker, one can provide support to Violet and others like her that her family does not give her.

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