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## HEALTHY CHOICES FOR MIND AND BODY

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### LIVING WILL / DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH

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If you have received the paper version of this newsletter, these documents are attached. If you are online, you can download template documents from:

[http://www.jmmdhs.com/downloads/advance\\_directives\\_form.pdf](http://www.jmmdhs.com/downloads/advance_directives_form.pdf) , or have a service complete your documents at a site like:

[http://www.lawdepot.com/contracts/healthdir/index.php?ldcn=healthdir&pid=google-health\\_us-directive\\_b1&a=t](http://www.lawdepot.com/contracts/healthdir/index.php?ldcn=healthdir&pid=google-health_us-directive_b1&a=t)

With a **Living Will** you determine the medical/nutritional efforts that will be made on your behalf if you are unable to communicate. Unless you want ‘everything under all circumstances’ or ‘absolutely nothing in the absence of response,’ you must specify your wishes for each possible medical condition. Another option, the **Durable Power of Attorney**, allows you to define your wishes in general terms, and you name an individual to interpret those wishes and make specific decisions for you. For either option, don’t be confined by the document’s language. Write in specifics about what you want done under a variety of circumstances. Medical situations frequently defy neat categories that beget simple decisions. Decide about organ donation. **Discuss your wishes with the person who would serve as your medical decision-maker if you become mentally incompetent.** (If you are mentally incompetent now, hide it and fill the forms out before you are found out.)

**Mental competence** is obviously relative, and there are more than a few people pretending to function in society who should be assigned a conservator. However, in the case of medical decision-making for a non-communicating individual, if there is any doubt, a neurologist determines level of brain function. (In another scenario involving a person who is capable of communicating, but seemingly not acting in his/her best interest, a psychiatrist determines psychological competence.)

Your medical decision-maker, or **Medical Power of Attorney**, does not have to be your next of kin. Choose someone you believe will always put your best interests first. The person should share your ideas about medical ethics. Ideally, the person won’t have any psychological baggage about your relationship - Keeping you alive because he feels guilty about neglecting you when he was an alcoholic doesn’t help you in your coma. Some people choose a best friend or an impartial independent party, just so family doesn’t have to make hard, emotional decisions.

You may change the document you complete today as many times as you wish. If you change your mind, complete another and give it to your doctor and kin.