

Everyone here knows a few things about the Mendelson's: we marry extremely well, we never fail to have an opinion, we are not known for our patience, and we often talk too much. Today as we mourn my mother's passing and celebrate and honor her life, I will attempt to avoid talking too much, but I am sure I will express a few opinions. I hope you will be patient with me as I try to share a few thoughts on behalf of my father and siblings.

With my work, I have learned that it is very important to try to gain another person's perspective and tease out their values, hopes, and concerns. I have learned that most people, including my mom, are far more complicated than we give them credit for. I have learned that everyone's life is a story with many chapters and no one person has read all of the chapters; I have learned that the last chapter is never truly the last chapter. I also have learned that at times like this, there aren't really right words to say; no correct way to feel; and everyone grieves differently. I have learned to help families think about what their loved one would want in difficult times rather than what they want for that person.

In light of this, I have decided to share my thoughts on what I think Mom would say if she had a few minutes to be with us today and share her thoughts about this day. Mom would say:

"I love you all."

"Don't be sad."

"I have lived more on some days than others have lived in their whole lives."

"I failed sympathy."

"I really have no regrets, honest."

"Dad is the love of my life."

"Selective neglect really worked; all of my children are independent, strong, and self-sufficient."

"I am proud of each you."

"I love my in-laws like my own kids."

"Of course I am going to Belize."

"I am lucky to have a man who adores me as much as your father."

"I didn't do everything right, but I tried hard."

"I read in Reader's Digest that"

"Take care of Dad."

"Take care of each other."

"If I had known how much fun being Grandma was going to be, I might have skipped being Mom."

"I don't understand how anyone could have voted for that S.O.B."

"Don't be sad."

“I love you all.”

How do you talk about my mom? Like most of us Mendelsons, she was far more complex and interesting than she appeared on the surface. It is fair to say that mom valued family, friends, and relationships beyond all else. Over the years, I have had many opportunities to talk to her about what made life worth living to her and how she wanted to approach the end of her life on earth. She was willing to do what it took to make it to one more Bar or Bat Mitzvah, one more Passover, or one more Family trip. Even up to 10 days ago, she hoped to be able to see Taliah sing in Italy. My mom was brave in her approach to dying. She would have gone to NY, or Texas, or Israel if it meant more months or years with her family. She was not afraid of dying, suffering, or discomforts so much as she feared the loss of her dignity, control, and quality time with all of us. She never wanted to be seen as frail or sick and she never met a bedpan that she could make friends with.

Mona has described Mom like a porcupine. She could be prickly and hard to get close to, but like the porcupine she had a soft, fuzzy, underbelly that was vulnerable and well protected. The quills made it easy to forget sometimes about the warmth and sensitivity hidden beneath. What you did know about Mom is that in a crisis, she is the one whom you could count on to take charge and get anything done. She was not someone too call for little things, but there was no one better when it really mattered. Mom usually took care of Dad and us. She was the one who made sure we got to the right doctors or the right specialists. She learned to master bucking the school system and health care system. She never took “no” for answer where it mattered.

My mom really loved Dad. She did throw a butter knife across the table at his head, but I think she missed on purpose. The window paid for Dad pushing just a little too hard. Mendelsons sometimes use bad judgment. The passion in this moment was more than matched by their adoration for each other. Mom was really upset that she was not going to keep her deal with Dad to out live him. Toward the end, Mom and Dad both made peace with this knowing that Dad would still have all of us and we would all still have each other.

Peace is something I think Mom would want all of us to have around her death. I know she is now at peace after struggling with so many things she had no power over. Mom had the incredible ability to recognize what she could change and to do it and the wisdom to accept what she couldn't. I am sure she would want us to accept her passing with the same grace with which she did.

In closing, as we live today with sadness for our loss, I hope you will find peace and comfort in having known my mother and celebrating her life and her legacy.

God who makes peace in High Places, will make peace for us and for all Israel and let us say, Amen.