



# Let Them Go Free: A Guide to Withdrawing Life Support

*Thomas A. Shannon, Charles N. Faso*

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*Let Them Go Free* offers families a way to cope with a problem particular to our time: what to do when medical treatment sustains life but does not cure or resuscitate a critically ill loved one. This straightforward and empathic guide helps such families affirm that their choice to remove life support is morally acceptable, warranted, and made in the spirit of love and care for the patient.

With an emphasis on maintaining openness and trust among all involved in the decision-making process, this helpful guide skillfully addresses the questions that must be asked to assess the best course of care for a loved one:

What is the patient's medical condition?

What are the medical options?

Has the patient expressed any wishes regarding his or her treatment?

What if the patient hasn't expressed any wishes regarding treatment?

Do we have to do everything possible to keep the patient alive?

Do we have to use artificial means of feeding?

How do we handle disagreements?

What should we do about donating organs?

*Let Them Go Free* also includes an ecumenical prayer service to be conducted as life support is withdrawn. Woven with readings and prayers from Hebrew and Christian scripture, the service is intended to give family and friends a moment to express their love for the patient, to say goodbye, and to find a sense of closure as they embark on the first stage of the grieving process.

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