



A Heartfelt Thank You From a Grateful Mother

I have a rule. Guests can stay for a three to six day visit. This is the story of a visit from my son Mark.

In September, my son and his wife divorced. He lost his job and started drinking. His ex-wife started working to support their two preschool age boys. Mark was not paying child support and his drinking worsened. During this time, contact with Mark was sporadic. I never knew how to get in touch with him or if he was ok. He would contact his ex-wife from time to time asking to come back home, but she knew she was better off without the burden he created for her.

During this time Mark visited me at home two or three times always arriving with no money and in bad shape, although he never drank during these visits. Mark was very aware of my three to six day visit rule. When he showed up in September,

looking physically worn and haggard, it tugged at my heart. So, even though he had reached the six day limit, I let him stay a few more days.

I could see he was taking over more and more each day. I tried to talk with him about it—only to find him increasingly belligerent and argumentative about everything. He would stay up all night and sleep for short periods of time. I would wake up to find the trash full of empty beer bottles. He rearranged the furniture and the picture arrangements on the wall during the night. My kitchen was always in disarray. Mark purchased a license to grow marijuana from a local doctor and started growing marijuana in my home. He rewired the electrical and lighting, digging up the patio to grow his plants. Mark would disappear for hours during the day and I never knew when he would return.

It was at this point where I was frightened. I felt I could control the arguments and yelling by not responding to his badgering and eternal criticism. I was so desperate that I even offered him money to leave my house. He replied that he wouldn't leave even if I gave him \$20,000. My friends began to worry about me. One friend believed Mark was returning from his afternoon disappearances high on meth.

The end had finally arrived. I was failing to help him change his ways, no matter what I did. I was deteriorating along with him and lost more than 70 lbs. in a short amount of time.

He finally told me the real reason he came home was to file papers with the court to prove me incompetent or insane, so that he could be declared the conservator of my home and finances. I realized that I was supporting my worst enemy. I needed guidance. He was becoming more erratic and I was fearful of the violence. He was destroying my home and I was ashamed to have anyone see what he had done to it. The end had arrived for this visit.

A friend invited me to breakfast at Coco's. She brought Danielle, an Adult Protective Services Social Worker, with her. I learned that I could save my home and myself, giving me relief that

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something could be done. Danielle gave me hope when she connected me to Cristi at Human Options.

Cristi was a pleasure, giving me more guidance and instruction as to my options. I was so encouraged and relieved to have someone guide me out of this wild jungle and the idea that I could resign as the general manager of the jungle. Cristi connected me to Mieka, a counselor at Human Options. Mieka was quiet, efficient, supportive and understanding of my position. I was badly in need of people who could understand my conflicting emotions and fear for my son and myself.

I never felt pushed or misguided. The final step was to get a restraining order that would remove Mark from my home and free me. Cristi and Mieka helped me navigate the legal process and get legal representation through the Chapman Elder Law Clinic, a partner of Human Options. They cleared the way for me to return to a normal life of an 85-year-old and supported me through this fearful experience. With their help, I was able to have Mark, his marijuana plants, weapons and all his belongings taken out of my home.

They each cared and guided me through this “three to six day visit”, which after almost nine months has finally ended.

I do not want to change what I had to do. Nor do I regret having freed myself from what had become a trap that was destroying what time I had left.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. I cannot repay you all, although I wish I could.

With gratitude,

Barbara Former Safe Options for Seniors client

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