

Power of Attorney, Power to Change Family Dynamics

When everything is running smoothly, all five adult siblings are thrilled that Jane has taken on power of attorney and is taking care of business for their dear mother who suffers from dementia. When money appears to be missing from mother's safety deposit box, however, everyone questions Jane's integrity. MRJC's direct dialogue with each sibling, and a Circle Process Restorative Dialogue, helps to restore family and to secure an investment of direct care for mom from all siblings.

Scenario: There is an old saying, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Most of us think this way. So do five adult siblings who are pleased to endow their sister Jane with power of attorney, and to see her take a lead role in the care of their mother who suffers from dementia. She has been her mother's caregiver for years. Jane keeps her fellow siblings in-the-loop about what is going on in mother's life and care, and by all accounts, she is doing a great job.

The siblings collectively choose to sell their mother's house. All of the sudden, Jane has more responsibility to manage money from the sale of the house in addition to attending to all of mother's daily needs.

The Conflict Escalates: Concerns arise when the siblings think that money is missing from mother's safety deposit box. All of a sudden, fellow siblings question Jane's integrity as the power of attorney for their mother. They demand full accounting from Jane regarding the contents of the safety deposit box. Jane is hurt by their accusation and claims that they are all "vultures" anticipating financial reward upon their mother's death without contributing anything to her well-being, care and quality-of-life. Jane refuses to account for safety deposit box contents, including the money. In her frustration, Jane challenges her siblings to "press charges" if they have a problem with how she is handling mother's affairs.

MRJC's Restorative Dialogue Team Gets Involved: This family care situation is referred to MRJC by the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton. MRJC immediately engages with Jane and her siblings to help them restore their sense of family and move forward with effective and equitable care for their mother. Five siblings participate in the MRJC Restorative Process, including one who lives out-of-town. Only one sibling declines.

MRJC's Case Coordinators diligently work with each sibling to prepare them for Restorative Dialogue. MRJC brings five siblings together in a friendly and safe environment with the support of our trained, expert Restorative Facilitators. They choose a Circle Process to best meet the needs of the family's situation.

Once the air is cleared about safety deposit box concerns, the siblings get to the heart of the matter – their lack of direct involvement in their mother’s care and affairs. They acknowledge that Jane has been carrying the load for many years, and in doing such a great job with their mother, they have taken her for granted.

As the Restorative Dialogue continues, the siblings come to an agreement on how they will ALL SHARE the responsibility of care for their mother. Our Restorative Facilitators guide the siblings through a planning process which identifies the scheduling of regular visits with mother, the need for help with her laundry and to provide other vital support assistance to Jane in her role as their mother’s caregiver.

MRJC has extensive experience in bringing families together for facilitated Restorative Dialogues in safe and nurturing environments. These intensive dialogues are led by our experienced Restorative Justice Facilitators. We help people to make difficult choices about the care of their dependent children, parents, grandparents, together, as a family, when members within the family, often have immovable positions when they enter the dialogue.

MRJC invests countless hours helping people like Jane and her siblings to overcome adversity, restore a renewed sense of family, in working toward healing or repairing harm and to create goals and strategies to alleviate issues and help the family to move forward.

To find out more about MRJC’s Restorative Dialogue process, please call us at 780.423.0896.