PSY605 End-of-Life Case Scenarios

Case 1: Roger is a healthy 62-year-old African American male with a wife and four grown children. While out on his morning jog two weeks ago, he was hit by a drunk driver. Roger has been left paralyzed from the neck down, and he is no longer able to perform basic life-sustaining functions such as eating or breathing without the help of machines. Because he can no longer talk or use his hands to write, his communication is limited to moving his head in simple "yes" or "no" responses when asked a question. His living will was last updated 25 years ago when his youngest child was born. The will indicates that Roger would like to receive life-saving treatments in these types of events. However, when prompted by doctors, nurses, and the hospital-appointed social worker regarding his current wishes, he seems to be communicating that he does not want to continue living in his current state.

Case 2: Geri is a 38-year-old single mother. Her son, Gabe, is 17 years old and a junior in high school. After experiencing some headaches and changes in mood over the past several weeks, Geri finally visited a neurosurgeon a week ago. During that visit, it was discovered that she has an inoperable brain tumor. Her life expectancy is 6 to 8 months. In addition to fears about her own impending death, Geri is very worried about how to best provide for and take care of her son. She cannot decide if she should continue working full-time to make sure that Gabe's expenses are taken care of, or if it is best to take this remaining time off to enjoy with her son. Once she is gone, she does not know if she should send Gabe to live with an aunt who lives several states away for his final year of high school, or if she should allow him to live with a friend in their neighborhood and grant custody to that parent so Gabe could continue living and going to school where he is most comfortable. She is also at a loss as to how to explain this situation to Gabe in a way that he will understand so that both of them will be able to move forward.