



Struggling With End of Life Decisions?

“ The things that matter most in our lives are not fantastic or grand. They are the moments when we touch one another, when we are there in the most attentive or caring way.” – Jack Kornfield

As frightening and painful as it can be, if you or your loved one has been given a terminal diagnosis, you should consider talking about end of life options before it's too late. By avoiding the topic, you could be depriving you and your loved one the opportunity to enjoy the peace of mind and support available.

One of the most difficult conversations we may be faced with is end of life care. Help your loved one take control of their journey by discovering resources that are available.

You'll probably find, too, that talking openly about their wishes can be a relief to both of you. Not only is your loved one likely to have some practical ideas and needs to take care of, but an honest discussion of your mutual grief, love, and appreciation will enrich your last months together – and your memories for years to come.

Is it ok to talk about end of life questions?

- It doesn't mean there's nothing else that can be done, it's not giving up it's taking control
- It doesn't mean there is no hope,
- It doesn't mean the end is coming soon,
- It doesn't have to be scary; it can actually be comforting, and
- It can be the right thing to do.

When should I talk about end of life care?

There are a number of circumstances that may lead you to consider talking about end of life care with your loved, other family members and/or physician:

- Following diagnosis of terminal illness
- After repeated hospitalizations or trips to the emergency room
- When you are seeing consistent decline
- When resident and/or family is requesting no further treatment or doctor visits



How do I start the conversation?

- Choose a private, relaxed time when you can have a one-on-one discussion with your family member without distractions. Be sure your family member is comfortable.
- Looking for an opening in the conversation will make the discussion easier; such as when your loved one refers to his or her condition, or perhaps talks about “giving up” on treatment.
- Most importantly, remember to ask and then *listen*. Ask open ended questions—those without a “yes” or “no” answer to get the conversation going. Examples include:
 - Who do you want to make decisions about your care if you are not able to speak for yourself?
 - What types of medical treatments do you wish to receive or not wish to receive?
 - How comfortable do you wish to be?
 - How do you wish to be treated? What special things, activities, etc. are important to you?
 - What would you want to communicate to your loved ones if you were no longer able to communicate?
 - Have you taken care of your advanced directives? Making your wishes known and designating a health care proxy gives you peace of mind you will be cared for per your wishes, and is a gift you can give your loved ones so they do not have to make difficult decisions.
 - Let your loved one respond; your silence is OK. If need be, prompt them with additional questions. If there is resistance, you may need to postpone the conversation. Accept the person’s response, and don’t judge. Remember that your opinions and their wishes may be different

Receiving the news that you or your loved-one has a terminal illness is *never* easy. It is also very difficult to bring up the subject of end of life care. Emotions, cultures, personalities and misled beliefs keep many people from receiving care. Early introduction of end of life care options leads to better care for both you and your loved ones.

Starting the end of life conversation early and continuing the conversation will help you and your loved-one make a responsible and satisfying decision about end-of-life care. Don’t wait to have your difficult conversation. Contact Providence Rest at (718) 931.3000 or email us and let us help you start your path to intentional living.